

1. WHY YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT YOUR TIME

TIME IS LIFE. It is irreversible and irreplaceable. To waste your time is to waste your life, but to master your time is to master your life and make the most of it.

As a Time Planning and Life Goals Consultant, I have created a new system which is helping millions of people right now to determine the best use of their time—and so gain control of their lives.

I'm not a "time and motion" organizer, trying to get everything done in the shortest time with the fewest wasted motions. That kind of efficiency means taking the thinking out of an activity and reducing it to a series of mechanical routines. There is no attempt to keep it fun or interesting, so you might even say that such extreme clockwatching takes the life right out of an activity, along with the thought.

I try to put more thinking into what people do, not take the thinking out. If you follow my suggestions, you'll probably find yourself thinking more about how you really want to use your time, working less hard, doing more of the things you've always wanted to do, and enjoying your life a lot more.

So please don't call me an efficiency expert. I'm an "effectiveness expert." Effectiveness means selecting the best task to do from all the possibilities available and then doing it the best way. Making the right choices about how you'll use your time is more important than doing efficiently whatever job happens to be around. Efficiency is fine in its place, but to my mind effectiveness is a much more important goal.

Some of the techniques of my system may surprise you. For instance, suppose you've got ten minutes before you must go to the dentist. If you're like most people, you'll fritter that time away. But I can show you how to invest those ten minutes so you can make a solid start on any big job you may have been putting off—like redecorating your home or an

alyzing your production costs. At the same time, I will help you to eliminate procrastination and maintain the momentum you need to get the job done.

In this book you'll learn about the experiences of my clients, my family and myself in applying my techniques. And you'll see that my system is not inflexible, mechanical or burdensome. Far from it! It's fun to learn and fun to experiment with. The benefits come immediately, and then continue to grow.

My system for effective time use has worked successfully for such corporate clients as A.T. & T., Bank of America, I.B.M., Lever Brothers, and Standard Oil Company of California; for numerous local and federal agencies; for such busy people as recording star Neil Diamond; feminist and writer Gloria Steinem; designer Milton Glaser; Mike McCloskey, Executive Director of the Sierra Club; William Ball, General Director of the American Conservatory Theatre; Mike Murphy, Esalen Institute president; Michael Butler, producer of "Hair;" and for thousands of executives, professionals, entrepreneurs, homemakers, students, and others who consult me during my seminars or on an individual basis.

I feel strongly about the value of my system because it has given me control of my own life. The system can also work successfully for *your* life and what *you* want to get out of it. I'm not necessarily trying to show you how to become president of your company or how to juggle simultaneous careers as office worker and mother. With my system, you *can* achieve such goals—if they really are your goals. But you can also become a more effective college student, chess player, candlemaker or international playboy. It's entirely up to you.

And please remember: There is no such thing as lack of time. We all have plenty of time to do everything we really want to do. If, like so many people, you're "too busy" to get things done, keep in mind that there are plenty of people who are even busier than you are who manage to get more done than you do. They don't have more time than you have. They just use their time to better advantage! Effective time use—like driving a car—is a skill that can be acquired, and in this book I have assembled all the tools you'll need. I'll show you sensible, practical ways so you can be the master

of the clock—not its slave—and do what you want with your life.

When all is said and done, there simply is nothing more important in your life than your time. I can't give you any more time than you already have. We all must live on 168 hours a week. But I can help you to use the time you have more effectively.

So let's begin!

2. YOUR PAYOFF: CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

Control is a KEY concept in this book. Since no synonym can do justice to everything that I mean by *control*, let me illustrate.

Make your hand into a fist. Squeeze your hand as hard as you can and feel the tension. If you hold the fist tight for even a few minutes, your hand will ache with the effort. Such a tensed, strained fist has few (peaceful) uses.

Next, drop your hand to your side. Keep all your muscles as loose as possible. You can't get much productive work out of your hand in that position, either.

Now raise your hand slowly in front of you and make it come alive. Gradually move the fingers and feel the muscles respond with good tone and control. Here is a hand that can get something done!

The kind of control I am recommending is in many ways analogous to good muscle tone. It is the sort of control over your time (and your life) that is neither too tight (i.e., compulsive, restrained, obsessive) nor too loose (i.e., apathetic, indifferent, lazy). This kind of control will help you get things done and also allows you to be flexible and spontaneous.

The ideal is balance.

Beware the Time Nut

The purpose of this book is emphatically not to turn you into a compulsive clockwatcher, or into someone who is constantly busy or aggressively efficient. To be more specific, here are three notorious characters that neither I nor anybody else enjoys having around:

The *overorganized person* is always making lists, updating lists, losing lists. When asked to do something, he tends to

spend much time considering every possibility, planning every detail, making sure that he has every base covered. He doesn't move without first planning the smallest detail, and consequently he often doesn't even get around to doing many things he should. He is more interested in feeling organized in his head than in accomplishing anything. If he doesn't get around to doing what he planned today—well, he'll just make a better plan tomorrow. He's so intent on being well-organized that he's often blind to changes, new opportunities, and the needs of others.

The *overdoer* is so busy doing things that he has no time to assess their true value. He is a hard person to approach, even with a time-saving idea. He's generally disliked because he tells everyone else what to do. He lacks spontaneity and flexibility. He's terribly efficient, but as often as not is eagerly clambering up the wrong tree. With every minute of his time, both at home and at work, filled with activity, he never has a moment to relax.

The *time nut* is overwhelmingly preoccupied with time. He makes himself and everyone else nervous with his concern about never wasting a minute. He's always rushing around to meet an impossible schedule. If a meeting starts even a minute late, he frets and fumes. He keeps careful records in great detail of what he does every day. He knows how to save eleven seconds eating his cereal! Not an easy person to work or live with.

If you think that trying to "get control" of your time and your life means becoming super-organized, super-busy, or preoccupied with every moment as it slips by, let me assure you that this is not the case. Each of the three types sketched above has taken a potentially valuable trait and turned it into a liability. Each is as badly off as the person who's totally disorganized, never does what he says he is going to do, never plans ahead, or goes through life from one crisis to another.

Neither extreme is desirable. Too much organization is as ineffective as too little. But there is no right answer. Different people require varying degrees of structure and spontaneity in their lives. What's more, the same person has different needs at different ages, at different times of the year, in different situations. The person who is well-organized at work may be very haphazard about his non-work activities. The

person who at thirty has a clear set of goals and knows exactly how he wants to use his time and his life may find that at forty he must break free of such plans if he is to grow.

You're the Judge

No part of my system is intended to be used inflexibly, automatically or mechanically. Its sole purpose and justification is to help set you free from internal and external restraints, *not* to take away one iota of your freedom and individuality.

Time use is a highly personal, individual matter of choice, and you must be the final judge of how to apply the suggestions presented in this book. It's important that you compare all of the things I say with the way you function best. As you read, assess your own strengths and weaknesses. Consider your own time problems and set priorities for what to improve. Don't be afraid to mark up the book, reading with pen or pencil to make the book yours. Underline the key ideas, and makes notes in the margins. List the numbers of the pages that are most important to you in the inside front cover for easy reference.

Pick and choose among the ideas. Recognize that different techniques work for different people, and that there are times when good advice for one person is useless for another. Select the ideas that will benefit you the most, and use them to help you lead a more enjoyable and satisfying life.

It doesn't matter whether you're doing office work, housework, school assignments, or just loafing—I'll show you how to do whatever you're doing more effectively. I'll help you separate those tasks that matter from those that don't. Believe me: You can get the important ones done, even if they seem overwhelming, unpleasant, or impossible.

Are you sick and tired of never getting anything done because you never get anything started? I'll show you how to end procrastination once and for all.

Do you want to improve your concentration, brush off distractions and develop stick-to-itiveness? I'll show you how. Do you want to deal with the people around you more effectively? I'll show you how to do that too—and keep them happy besides.

This book offers tested techniques for performing under

pressure, and will show you all the ins and outs of executing a project with tact, precision, and timeliness.

If you're so inclined, this book can help you increase your earning power. Making better use of your time will endear you to your boss, or, if you're in business for yourself, will give you more time to ply your trade.

Above all, this book will show you how to work smarter, not harder, with the end result that you have more time for yourself, your family, and your friends, or time to undertake that dream you've been putting off because you "haven't had the time." You'll feel less at the mercy of the uncontrollable elements of your situation and environment. You'll be better able to improvise, amend, and rearrange such elements to suit your personality, goals, and outlook.

It might sound like a contradiction in terms, but I think that by the end of this book you'll agree with me that the biggest payoff of all in achieving greater *control* of your time and your life is greater *freedom*.

3. DRIFT, DROWN OR DECIDE

LOOKING UP from her morning paper, Ms. Kay smells smoke and sees the kitchen curtains near the stove in flames. Is the best use of her time to (1) butter her toast and finish reading the news, or (2) do something about the rapidly spreading fire? Whether Ms. Kay runs toward the curtains with a pot of water, calls the Fire Department on the telephone, or dashes to the corner fire alarm box, no one would maintain that a better use of her time would be to butter her toast.

Most choices, of course, are not so absurdly easy. After fourteen years in the auto industry, Mr. Williams was considering changing careers. His advancement had been good, but not as good as he had hoped. He found his job as production manager for a Kalamazoo assembly plant only moderately interesting. He was bored with Kalamazoo, and thought that living in Chicago would be more exciting.

Mr. Williams was tempted to make a change. But which? Should he use his production-management experience to change industries? Should he seek a production job in Chicago or some other large city? Should he move first, then find a new job? How should he go about looking? Or should he forget all about production and study to become a real-estate salesman? With so many different options, his final decision is not at all clear-cut.

Like Ms. Kay and Mr. Williams, you and everybody else are faced with all kinds of decisions, some hard and some easy, some large and some small—every day.

Who Can Do It All?

Would you like to be a doctor, lawyer, Indian chief, musician, architect, artisan, baseball player? Would you like to

travel to Europe, South America, Nigeria, Timbuktu? It's not just a matter of talent and money. Even an Einstein or an Onassis can't do everything there is to do and see everything there is to see in the world. Decisions, decisions, decisions surround us all, clamoring for attention.

How about today? Will you work, go to a show, read a book, visit friends, sleep late, play bridge? Your time is limited, but your imagination isn't. Most people, in just a few minutes of daydreaming, can come up with enough activities to keep them busy for weeks or even months.

And what about all those things you *have* to do: draw up the report the boss is expecting, answer overdue correspondence, pick up theater tickets, plan your vacation trip, lobby with the personnel man for a new assistant, worry about your son's school grades, go shopping for a new suit, go to the dentist, weed the garden? How can you possibly do everything you ought to do today?

Tomorrow there will be still more things to do. Life is a never-ending stream of possible activities, constantly being replenished by your family, your teachers, your boss, your subordinates, as well as by your own dreams, hopes, desires, and by the need to stay alive and functioning. You have so much to do, but so little time!

Your many options are to some extent a recent development. In the not-too-distant past, when choices were fewer, life and its tools less complex, horizons more limited, people had less need to think about how they spent their time. For all but a privileged few, necessity dictated many actions. Other aspects of people's lives were determined by such fixed conditions as tradition, religion, social class, or where they happened to have been born.

Today, with social, economic, and physical mobility a reality for so many people, and with considerable leisure time available, the opportunities for and pressures of making choices have multiplied. The choices are often complex and difficult. This is especially true for women, who face a veritable explosion of new options.

Everyone Wants Some Of Your Time

Maybe you're at one and the same time a breadwinner, spouse, family member, bridge player, churchgoer, Lion's Club member, and a politically alert citizen. You must juggle the time demands made on you in each of these roles. Nor is that all. A dozen irate customers all demand immediate delivery of the same out-of-stock widget. All the family members clamor for your attention when you come home from work. Three television networks want you to watch their programs. You could spend a great deal of time reconciling these conflicting demands and trying to keep everyone happy.

Some demands by others should be accepted graciously. When something is important to someone you care about, even if it's not important to you, remind yourself that you live in an interdependent world and this means sharing your time to some extent.

After all, you knew when you "hired out" to work for your organization or when you married that you'd be giving up some freedom to decide how to spend your time in exchange for other things you consider important—love, security, companionship, money, dinner. Face it. Sometimes you've got to do what others want you to do. But not always!

Doing What You Want To Do

In discussing her son's future with friends, Mrs. Reed was quite emphatic about the best use of her son's time. After Jack graduated from high school he would go to college at his parents' alma mater. Jack had other ideas. He was tired of school, had doubts about the usefulness of formal education, and felt that the best use of his time would be to travel for a year or two.

What is the best use of Jack's time? The answer isn't clear, although certainly Mrs. Reed and Jack each have rather strong opinions on the subject.

Who is the decisionmaker? Jack is. Mrs. Reed may claim to have the right to decide, but even if Jack does go on to college (if only to please his mother), he has decided.

Situations in which you feel other people are making your decisions for you are not uncommon. A parent, a child, a

spouse, a boss, a friend may seem to have as much say about how you spend your time as you yourself do—and sometimes more.

That feeling may be understandable, but the fact is otherwise. Ultimately, another person can only recommend what you ought to do—you and you alone make the final decision. You either accept or reject the recommendation. Of course, some decisions involve painful consequences. Your boss wants you to work on a certain project but you have your own ideas about what you should be doing with your time. If you continue to press your position, you may find yourself without a job. But in many situations the element of free choice is quite large indeed.

True enough, it may sometimes seem that you have little free choice. It is foolish to deny that age, education, background, economic status, sex, and race impose real limits on us all. So let's recognize at the outset that in everyone's situation there *are* uncontrollable elements. It saves a great deal of time to make a realistic assessment of what these are, and then accept them. Playing the game of wishing "*If only I were younger . . . or richer . . . or poorer . . . or smarter . . . or more successful . . .*" is *not* a good use of one's time (though you may decide that *doing* something about these things is an excellent use of your time).

There are constraints on everyone that make free choice impossible in all situations. But you are free to choose much of the time. Maybe you are kidding yourself if you believe outside factors are controlling your life. It could be you are not even doing a very good job in those areas where you *do* have control.

Are You Clinging To The Past?

Consider the case of one of my clients, a top salesman who was so successful selling his company's products that he was promoted to sales manager. He was proving to be much less successful in his new job, and came to me in desperation. His problem soon became apparent. Upon his promotion he faced a conflict between the old habit of doing the selling himself and the new necessity of training and motivating his salesmen to sell for him. Too often he was answering the

question, "What is the best use of my time now?" as if he were still a salesman rather than a sales manager.

The sales manager found that by consciously keeping track of the number of hours that he spent in the old and new roles he gradually was able to change his habits and channel more of his time toward his new responsibilities.

Role adjustments are required whenever there is a major change in your life: going away to college, getting married, having children, changing jobs or localities, retiring. You want to be sure you are making time choices that are right for your current rather than your past situation.

Why Deciding Is So Difficult

At times everybody is faced with wanting to do different and contradictory things. Rational, emotional, and physical needs must all be satisfied, but cannot always be satisfied at the same time. Sometimes they have to fight it out. Work or play golf? Read your book or play with your child? Have a second cup of coffee at lunch or go back to the office? How to decide?

Mr. Smith knew that the use of a dictating machine would save him time, but he hated talking to a blank wall. Should he listen to his *rational* part and save time, or to his *emotional* part and dictate to his secretary? Mr. Smith thought he had solved the problem by putting a picture of his secretary on his desk when he dictated. This gave him the feeling he was talking to a real person who would transcribe his dictation. Everything worked fine until one day his wife visited his office to pick him up for dinner and discovered his secretary's picture on his desk. You can imagine the price Mr. Smith had to pay when he picked himself and the broken picture up off the floor. Perhaps Mr. Smith would have done better to put a picture of his wife and family on his desk to remind him where the money he earned went.

Another kind of conflict makes it hard to choose: long-term vs. short-term goals. Should you cook tonight's dinner or get ready for a weekend dinner party? Water the lawn or read your gardening books?

Mr. Martin had a large backlog of work. To catch up he needed at least a month, yet management demanded there be no more than a week's backlog. Mr. Martin had figured out a

procedure that would cut the processing time of each item in half, but his new system would take at least two months to implement.

Should Mr. Martin tell everyone who knocked on his door for their order to come back in two months? This would give him the time he needed to implement the new procedure. But the back-order situation would be approaching chaos.

Or should Mr. Martin keep struggling to get out the work as best he can, keeping at least some people happy as their finished work comes off the production line each day? True, it would take him longer to fill each back order, but that was the way it had always been done. And he would be showing daily progress on the backlog, something he couldn't do if he devoted his energies to instituting the new procedure.

Should Mr. Martin emphasize the short term, and keep some work coming out daily—or the long term, and revise the procedure? Whatever he does, he's going to make some people unhappy. If he takes the short-term route, he loses long-term benefits. If he chooses the long-term route, he gives up short-term value. In a situation like this he might put the decision up to his boss; or decide to take either extreme; or devise some middle-of-the-road compromise, getting out some work daily but also moving the new procedure ahead a little each day. Whatever he does, he needs to resolve the conflict between the short term and long term if he wants to retain his job and his sanity.

Making Decisions

Your time use is the result of hundreds of thousands of big and little choices made each year, month, week, day and minute deciding what to do and how you should do it. Are you aware of the reasons why, for example, you make certain social decisions? Here are some possibilities:

1) *Habit.* For years you've gotten together with the Joneses once a month. You're beginning to lose interest and have to admit that you haven't had such a good time lately. Still, it's such an automatic routine that you continue to go out with them.

2) *Demands of others.* Your husband keeps nagging you

to invite over a couple who might prove to be helpful to his business; finally you give in although you do not like them.

3) *Escapism*. You sit at home and daydream about how nice it would be to get together with another couple you recently met, but you never quite get around to inviting them over since you are scared off by the possibility that they might think you are presumptuous.

4) *Spur of the moment*. You suddenly decide you want to go to a show that evening, phone the Andersons to join you, but find they are already engaged, so you settle for going with another couple you don't like nearly as well.

5) *Default*. You wait for other couples to invite you out, and therefore spend most of your time either at home or among people you might not prefer.

6) *Conscious Decision*. You sit down with your husband, lay out a program of inviting over new acquaintances with whom you have a lot in common and old friends you haven't seen often enough lately.

Spur of the moment decisions can be fine. Nor is there anything "wrong" with decisions that come about by default, the demands of others, escapism or habit. But if you are not satisfied with the payoff from those decisions, more conscious efforts are called for. How tempting it is in difficult situations to drift, dream or drown. But is that really what you want to do? There is an alternative. You can drift, dream or drown—or you can decide.

4. CONTROL STARTS WITH PLANNING

"I feel like I waste so much of my time doing things that are not really important to me, while my life is slipping away."

"I have so much to do; there's just not enough time for me to do it all."

"I'm harassed, overworked, tired, tense. I seem to be forever pushing myself, and can't ever relax completely."

THIS IS WHAT I often hear from people who talk with me about their time problems. Behind each statement is a wish that things could somehow be different: "If only I could get on top of the situation." "If only I could be more like so-and-so, who seems to have time to do everything and still manages to be relaxed and happy." "If only I could do what I *really* want to do." "If only I were in control!"

Control starts with planning.

Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.

Everyone makes plans: what movie to see tomorrow night, which friends to visit next weekend, where to vacation next summer, big plans and little plans, realistic plans and far-fetched plans, playful plans and serious plans.

Most people plan rather haphazardly. They usually do it only when they feel forced to. Perhaps you feel overwhelmed by the work you have to do and this forces you to plan your day. Or you have a large block of uncommitted vacation time and you want to use it in a satisfying way. This kind of occasional, special-purpose planning is a valuable tool indeed, but it does have limitations. If you *only* plan this way you run the risk of not planning when you really most need to.

I have never known anyone who was hurt by too much of the kind of planning I am going to recommend. I have

known many people who have suffered from failure to plan adequately.

Learning From Professionals

Consider the difference between an amateur and a professional photographer. The person who uses his camera occasionally to capture a birthday party, a scenic view, or a family outing will snap a few pictures of the cherished moment, eagerly await the outcome, then, often as not, feel disappointed with the results. Out of a dozen or so pictures, several will come out blurred, one will include only a part of someone's head, another will capture a frown rather than a smile. He will rightly conclude he is not a good photographer.

The professional photographer proceeds quite differently. He shoots several rolls of film. When these are developed he studies the results, and discovers more bad shots than our amateur did. But because he has taken so many shots, he sees some that he is quite pleased with.

Then he goes into the darkroom and considers what he can do to improve the good shots. He experiments with cropping, exposure, etc., and he ends up with perhaps half a dozen prints that he likes particularly well. He selects the very best of these and, after giving them further careful attention, ends up with a prize-winning photograph.

These are the differences between occasional and serious time planners too. The occasional time planner gets a fuzzy shot of his goal, and may even miss the mark entirely. He's uncomfortable with the results; they seem hardly worth the effort. He concludes, and rightly so, that he's not a good planner, and gives up.

On the other hand, the serious time planner will take many and frequent shots of his plans. What begins as a fuzzy, ill-defined jungle of conflicts gradually comes into focus. A wild shot that does not really represent a desired goal gets weeded out. The more important aspects of the plan are refined and elaborated on so that more and more meaning is built into them.

He checks as the days go by to see how he is following through on his plans. He looks for problems, false assumptions, hang-ups, and difficulties, and makes corrections where

he has to. Like our professional photographer, he makes some readjustments and becomes better and better at what he does.

A banker I know has his work time under control and now spends more time with his family on his boat. By planning his time carefully he's found it easier to take on new projects and adapt his day-to-day routine to fit his long-term plans. He is a good time planner not because he started out that way but because he put time and effort into refining his plan.

Do You Know How You Set Your Priorities Now?

Planning and making choices are often hard work. They involve careful thinking and decision-making. They also force you to recognize what criteria you use in setting priorities. The wife of a very talented filmmaker said during our consulting session that she felt she was wasting her time. Her criteria in setting time priorities, it turned out, revolved around her family's needs, when what she really wanted to do was structure her time in terms of her own needs. She came to realize that once she took care of her own time needs she would feel more comfortable coping with the needs of her family.

Different criteria may result in different priorities and cause a conflict of interests. However, if you're aware of this, as the filmmaker's wife was after our consultation, you'll be better equipped to deal with the conflict. For instance, a teacher may be studying for an advanced degree at night. She cares about her students, but she also wants to better her professional standing. When she comes home from her own classes at the university, should she work on grading her third-graders' compositions or drag out that Comparative Lit. paper she's been writing? If her criterion is her own students' needs, then she grades the compositions, but if her criterion is her own advancement, then a better use of her time is to work on that Comparative Lit. paper. Her choice depends on her priorities; whatever she decides, proper planning will enable her to recognize that she should settle the conflict between her own needs and those of her students.

Many people seem to have difficulty planning because they regard it only as "thinking"—which all too often translates

into either "staring into space" or "daydreaming." They need a way to make a more concrete task out of planning. From experience with thousands of people I have concluded that it is much better to conceive of planning as "writing" than as "thinking."

The following chapters contain a number of exercises, and I'll ask you to write the answers to some questions. Writing the answers down will reduce your tendency to daydream, and also help you make better decisions. I call the time when you plan "Decision Time," because that's what planning is all about—making decisions as to *what* and *when* and, if necessary, *how*.

In all planning, long-range, middle-range, or short-range, you (1) make a list, and (2) set priorities. All the items on a list are not of equal value. Once you have made a list, set priorities based on what is important to you now. In my opinion, no list is complete until it shows priorities. Whenever you make a list, finish the list by setting priorities.

It's as Basic as ABC

Use the ABC Priority System: write a capital letter "A" to the left of those items on the list that have a high value; a "B" for those with medium value; and a "C" for those with low value. As you do this, you know that to some extent you're guessing. You're not sure you'll be right on the value. But comparing the items to one another will help you come up with the ABC priority choices for every entry on the list.

Items marked A should be those that yield the most value. You get the most out of your time by doing the A's first, and saving the B's and C's for later. Taking account of the time of day and the urgency of the items, you can break them down further so that A-items become A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4.

ABC's are relative, depending on your point of view (remember, you are the decisionmaker). A task might be an A-priority while you're thinking of all the rewards that come when it is done. But halfway through, when the going gets rough and you don't like the discomfort involved in sticking to it, you drop it in the middle. Was it an A or not? Even so, if you doubt your judgment, whose is better? I say you are the best judge of your own priorities, and if you are not satis-

fied with the way things come out you need to improve your ability to focus on what you really consider important.

The ABC's are also relative depending on what's on your list. The A's generally stand out clearly in contrast to the less important B's and C's. In a work of art, attention-getters including vivid colors and foreground details stand out from the background and catch the eye first. Your A-items should be the attention-getters on your list.

ABC's may change over time. Today's A may become tomorrow's C, while today's C becomes tomorrow's A. You need to set priorities continually, considering the best use of your time right now.

ABC's may further vary depending on the amount of time you decide to invest in a particular project. You could probably satisfy the boss with about two hours' work on the report he wanted (you feel it's a C), impress him with about four hours (now it's a B), and make a lot of points if you broadened the question under study and devoted ten hours to solving the more general case (you've made it an A).

A few minutes worrying about Bobby's poor grades might help you come up with some good ideas to improve them, but it would be a waste of time to spend too long on it without getting some feedback from Bobby and perhaps his teacher.

While spending an hour a day playing with your youngster may be an A, spending six hours to the neglect of your husband and house can at best be a B, and spending every minute of the waking day amusing him so that neither the youngster nor you sees anyone else is certainly a C.

Obviously, it's not worthwhile to make a big effort for a task of little value. On the other hand, a project with high value can be worth a great deal of effort. Only good planning will let you reap maximum benefits from minimum time investments.

5. WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT FROM LIFE?

What are your lifetimes goals?

How would you like to spend the next three years?

If you knew now you would be struck by lightning six months from today, how would you live until then?

IT MAY SEEM TRITE to say so, but perhaps you've never stopped to take stock. The basic resource that each person starts with is his lifetime—all the minutes, hours, days, and years that he is alive. It's only within this total framework that good time planning is possible. Which is why I recommend you start by defining your lifetime goals.

I'll soon get down to your minute-by-minute problems of today. But right now a written Lifetime Goals Statement will help you discover what you really want to do, help motivate you to do it and give meaning to the way you spend your time. It will give a direction to your life. It will help you feel in control of your destiny. And it will provide a measuring stick against which to gauge alternate activities as they come along. You'll be better able to balance the many aspects of your life. And you'll reduce unnecessary conflict over how to use your time.

A Lifetime Goals Statement is neither magic nor a cosmic exercise in clairvoyance. There's really very little involved in getting one down on paper. Some people do feel a bit uneasy about it. They feel it's overwhelming. They claim it's embarrassing. Or they feel that a written plan will permit their options and take some of the creativity and spontaneity and fun out of their lives. Let me assure you nothing could be further from the truth. Over 15,000 people in my seminars and consultations have composed Lifetime Goals Statements and I believe each one has come away with a clearer picture of just what he wanted to do with his life. Few of them had

written down their lifetime goals before they came to my seminars.

So let me put the question to *you*: What are *your* lifetime goals?

In one way or another, whether you have been explicitly aware of it or not, you have been thinking about your lifetime goals almost as long as you have been alive. However, thinking about your goals is usually quite a different experience from writing them down. Unwritten goals often remain vague or utopian dreams, such as "travel," or "becoming a millionaire." Writing goals down tends to make them more concrete and specific and helps you probe below the surface of the same old clichés you've been telling yourself for years.

You can gain a valuable new perspective by seeing your long-familiar thoughts committed to paper, because you can then examine them more closely. Once they have an independent identity, you can scrutinize them better. They can be analyzed, refined, changed, updated, and pondered.

Also, you most likely will discover goals that are important to you even though you never verbalized them or took them seriously before. This happens because writing requires you to be more specific; aims get narrowed down, because you can't write very many words compared to the millions you have thought in your lifetime. In fact, your selection of what you write down indicates priorities that might surprise you.

If you have never tried writing down your lifetime goals, the following exercise will help you get started. If you have a goals list already, you may find it helpful to update your thoughts using this exercise.

Your Lifetime Goals Exercise

Get several pieces of paper, a pencil or pen, and a watch or clock with a second hand, and set aside about fifteen minutes. Write at the top of a sheet of paper the question, *What are my lifetime goals?*

(In identifying lifetime goals you should recognize that you would get different answers at ages five, twenty-five, and sixty-five. So you should interpret your lifetime goals as the goals that represent the way you see your life starting from right now and from the perspective you have today.)

Now, take exactly two minutes to list answers to the question on your paper. Of necessity, you will have to stay very general and abstract, but you should still have time to take account of personal, family, social, career, financial, community, and spiritual goals. Try to make your list as all-inclusive as you can. Try to get as many words down in the two minutes as possible. During this listing stage you are not committed to any of the goals that you write down, so record whatever comes into your head.

Don't be afraid to include such far-out wishes as climbing the Matterhorn, going to a group-sex party, eating a whole cheesecake, taking the year off, building a retirement home in Italy, chartering a yacht, adopting triplets, losing forty pounds by jogging an hour a day. There's nothing wrong with uncensored fantasies.

After the first two minutes are up, give yourself an additional two minutes to make any changes necessary for you to feel satisfied with your statement of goals at this early general level.

You might identify one or two additional lifetime goals by looking for implicit trends in your current pattern of living. For example, if you diligently read books while commuting on the bus, you may have an unspoken goal of continuing your education. Regular reading of the newspaper may suggest goals of keeping informed and entertained. You'll have a chance to decide later whether or not these are really significant lifetime goals.

The Second Lifetime Question

When you list lifetime goals quickly and without much reflection, you probably include a number of generalities such as "happiness," "success," "achievement," "love," "making a contribution to society," and the like. You can pin-point your goals better by now asking a second question *How would I like to spend the next three years?* (If you are over thirty, change the "three" to "five" years.) Again list your answers as quickly as you can for two minutes, then take another two minutes to include whatever you may have missed the first time around on this question.

The Third Lifetime Question

Now, for a different perspective, write down this third question: *If I knew now I would be struck dead by lightning six months from today, how would I live until then?* (This means that you'd have only six months to live and would have to squeeze whatever you consider important into your dramatically reduced time on earth. Before you start listing, assume that everything relating to your death has been attended to. You have completed your will, bought a cemetery plot, and the like. Your answer to the question should concern itself with how you would *live* these last six months.)

The purpose of this question is to find out whether there are things that are important to you that you're not doing now or which deserve more of your attention in the next six months. You might continue to live as you do now; or, if you had the money, you might want to quit your job and live it up for the last six months. What *would* you do? Write your answers as quickly as possible for two minutes, then go back and improve them for an additional two minutes. (Don't get lost in thinking about this question—just write.)

If you have read to this point without writing answers to the three lifetime goals questions, I urge you to go back and do it now. This is an important exercise, and doing it will really benefit you.

Working Further On All Three Questions

Now spend an additional two minutes minimum reviewing and improving your goals statements in answering all three questions. You may spend longer if you wish.

In looking over all three sets of answers you may have found that the answers to question 2 were an extension of question 1, and this is desirable. Some people also find question 3 (the six-months question) a continuation of the previous two, but others are jarred into sharp departures from their previous plans because of the sudden realization that their time is limited.

For instance, I probably wouldn't quit my work and travel

around the world. I would try to do as much time-management consulting as I could, and I'd definitely take off more time, but basically I wouldn't change very much because I'm happy in what I'm doing.

Someone else may say, "OK, I'm going to stop where I am and I'm going to eat, drink, and be merry because I'm going to die in six months. I'll travel around the world, I'll use up all my money, I'll do all the things I've always wanted to do." There's no one "right" answer. The choice is up to the individual.

For those who are happy doing what they are doing, the six-months question represents an affirmation; they'll continue along as they are.

For those who come up with a completely different set of things to do, some real changes may well be in order. They shouldn't put in good time after bad. The six-months question will help identify some things they would do if forced by circumstance to take stock of their lives. The point is: With proper time management, there's no real reason why they shouldn't start doing most of their preferred activities today.

Now you have a list of goals. But you have probably thought of more to do than there is time to do it in. This lack of time creates goal conflicts.

Conflicts among various goals on your list need not necessarily be disturbing. A goal to spend more time advancing your career may conflict with a goal to spend more time with your family. This competition for your attention can stimulate you to increase the quality of the time you spend on each. If, on the other hand, these goal conflicts cause you to feel frustrated, then a good use of your time would be to try to resolve such conflicts.

How to Resolve Goal Conflicts

Goal conflicts are resolved by setting priorities. You must decide which goals are most important to you at this time.

Some conflicts will seem to take care of themselves when they are put down on paper. If an individual finds that he doesn't assign a high value to what he had long thought he most wanted to do, then chances are he really knew all along

that other goals had higher priority. He simply hadn't faced the reality before.

Other conflicts are much more difficult to resolve. If you are faced with a painful choice between two opposing goals, keep in mind that priorities can later be adjusted and re-adjusted *ad infinitum*. Your goals are written on paper—not carved on marble tablets.

If you are reluctant to set a higher priority for one goal (say, going back to school) and hence a lower priority for another (family time), you could consider each equally important. If you then allocate more hours to one than to the other, you can still tell yourself that they are equally important. Even if they are mutually contradictory, or need to be done in the same time period, you can console yourself by telling yourself that you're giving up one—but only for right now. Next week or next year you will give the other goal its turn.

There is no other way. You must face up to the challenge of deciding what is important to you now by setting priorities. Here is how to sort things out, using the three lists you have already prepared.

How to Set Lifetime Priorities

Take your Lifetime Goals list in hand and spend one minute selecting your top three goals. Label the most important of these A-1. The second most important is A-2. The third is A-3. Do the same for your three-years list, and your six-months list.

At this point you have nine goals culled from the three lists. To pick out the three most important long-term goals of the nine, write on a fresh piece of paper, "My three most important long-term goals are. . . ." Then write them in order: A-1, A-2, A-3. You have now finished a preliminary Lifetime Goals Statement. You have zeroed in on just what it is you want to do with your life as you see it at this time.

When I work with individual clients I spend a lot of time helping them refine their Lifetime Goals Statements. We might go through six or seven drafts over a period of two weeks before we come up with a statement that represents

the client's true preferences. You too will find it helpful to attempt refinements of the statement several times.

Just as a photographer may shoot and reshoot the same scene to get the desired effect, your Lifetime Goals Statement will benefit from successive "shots." So tomorrow repeat the Goals exercise and compare the results. You won't get precisely the same answers, and the odds are you'll come up with additional information that you didn't include the first time around. That's just the way the human mind works.

Since the Lifetime Goals Statement is not static, it should be revised periodically. A good time every year to reevaluate your statement is on your birthday. Even if you snapped the perfect picture last year, this year you are different and last year's picture is not an adequate representation of how you see things. Your lifetime goals statement should grow as you grow.