

# Time Shifting

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12 August 1996

This is my summary and abstraction of the book "Time Shifting: creating more time to enjoy your life" by Stephan Rechtschaffen, M.D. ISBN 0-385-47849-6. The book is about dealing with the time pressures that we normally are under. The book is split into two sections. The first section is about the techniques of time shifting. The second is about the applications (self, relationships, children, work, health, play, and so on). I felt the book was pretty useful and had some good ideas in it. Some people may be put off by the Eastern culture tones and concepts (i.e. it gets downright Zen). I found the last couple of chapters rather utopian and 'preachy'.

The normal priorities that we push ourselves into tend to be:

1. Work
2. Primary relationships (spouse, family life)
3. Personal responsibilities (chores)
4. Social responsibilities (friends)
5. Ourselves

And generally, we don't get to do anything for ourselves. For most of us, if we improve at time management, we end up running faster, but still don't get time for ourselves. The point of time shifting is not time management, but (in essence) living in the moment. Stopping from thinking about the past or future and focusing on now. It really is about perception and attitude. (I know that this sounds sort of hokey, but in my brief playing around with it, it does make a difference.)

We should control our time, not time (i.e. clocks and schedules) controlling us. We all operate in various rhythms - how fast or slow we are operating. A key factor is that we end up synchronizing with other rhythms - from people, the environment, society or whatever. (The author calls this entrainment.) The speed of the rhythms that we get sucked into seem to be constantly high speed or speeding up. We are at high RPMs all the time (and therefore stressed out).

The basic concept of time shifting is to first consciously recognize the rhythms - the entrainment - that are pulling on us. The next step is to set a different rhythm - one appropriate for us or for our current situation. (Like many things, the way to do better is to be proactive rather than reactive.) Although most of the book is about slowing down, the concept applies to speeding up as well.

The author suggests various opportunities and ways to timeshift:

## ***Being in the moment:***

When you are feeling most stressed, consciously try to slow down. There are a couple of techniques that may help:

- Take a deep breath (or several)
- Stand up
- Closing your eyes
- Listen (i.e. concentrate) on a sound
- Watch (i.e. concentrate) on an object
- Meditate

## ***Time boundaries:***

Find regular boundaries that allow you to time shift. Although the author didn't structure them this way, to me, they are of two types - momentary and moderate length. During the course of a normal day, you do several tasks. When you are done with one, do a momentary time shift before starting on the next. For the moderate length time shifts are no shorter than 15 minutes. For example, 15 minutes after lunch do a time shift, but before any meetings in the afternoon.

***Mundane tasks:***

Use normal chores as mechanism to slow down. For example, doing dishes or ironing or mowing the yard. Don't think about all the other things you could/should/want to be doing, but get into the moment and flow of the task at hand.

***Spontaneous time:***

Take advantage of time gaps that are unexpected. For example, when the net goes down or a flight gets cancelled, use that time to time shift. (The classic is 'snow days'.) But, don't just shift into some other high stress activity. It is possible to actually schedule time - but without a specific set of tasks or objective - free time.

***Doing what we want:***

Schedule time where you do what you like and use it as a time shift mechanism. This could include things like art, bicycling, walking, sports, music, etc.

***Time retreats:***

Periodically (like yearly), it is appropriate to get a longer, more in depth, shift of our rhythms. For lots of people this involves getting to a more natural setting. Note that this is not the way most of us do vacations, but is really like the classical retreat.