

September, 2009 Vampire Time and Monkey Mind

Copyright © 2009 M. Colleen Klimczak

In the interest of my topic for this month, I will admit that I succumbed to pop culture and read and enjoyed the Twilight series of books this past spring. Around that same time, I watched seasons of two different vampire television series. I am not goth or dark, I just have always been interested in Sci-Fi/Fantasy, and these shows were all over the TV.

The reason I am telling you all of this? Reading about these individuals who live very long lives made me reflect on Time, and how we choose to spend it. What would I do if I had hundreds of years, the time to do everything? Learn new languages, new musical instruments? Read more, travel more? Improve and Evolve?

This is not an article on Time Management. Perhaps we could call it Time Maximization? Or Time Appreciation? And be warned, If I have to master the problem before writing about it, perhaps I should stop now... Goodness knows, I am not the expert!

Every once in a while I feel the need to challenge myself, and this Fall, I am challenging my self to be On Time. I am guilty of "Just one more thing". For example, we have to leave for school at 8:10 am. And I say, at 8:09, "sure I have time to start a load of laundry and check my email". So these past two weeks, when that "Just one more thing" thought goes through my head, I have given myself a mental hand slap and focused on getting the kids to school on time. So far, it's working. Laundry and email can wait, really they can.

But I've also been trying to wrap my head around the concept, the implications of Time. My son asked for another word for "Time", for a puzzle he was creating. There were so many potential meanings that we spent a while trying to pin down exactly what he was looking for.

Try this, for a change, if you, too, struggle with how to spend your time: **Start your day believing you have all the time you need to get the important things done.** Let that roll around in your head for a minute...

What this means to me is that I truly do have the time to finish things today, IF... I know what the important things are, and toss the unimportant things out. And to help me do this,

I have to remember that :

- Everyone's Time is Valuable, even my own;
- Some things are more important than others;
- Not everything has to get done today / Boundaries are critical;
- Any progress towards a goal is time well spent;
- Multitasking is a myth; and
- Other people's priorities for today are not my priorities for today.

Everyone's Time is Valuable, even my own:

- Our time is the only thing only we can give.
- If I want others to respect my time, I have to do so, too. I can't change others, but I can change me.
- Being late, even my usual "just a few minutes" is disrespectful of other people's time.

Some things are more important than others:

- Spend your time well and wisely. Spend it on the parts of your life that really matter, like your faith and your relationships with your family and friends. Being organized is not about micro-managing your stuff, it is about getting the stuff in order so you can go and do better things.
- Consider all the ramifications of how you spend your time and look at the big picture. Taking the kids to the park may seem like just fun, but during that time we also show our kids they matter, we cultivate a love of exercise and the nature, etc.
- Most days I have a pretty good idea of what I need to do, where I need to go, etc. But those things really important to me—Family and Community— will always win. If my kids get sick, everything else can wait until tomorrow. Their well-being, education, faith formation, all those things will win out over my to-do list!

- In addition to “Just one more thing”, I am also a pro at “eating while doing”. I rarely sit down for breakfast, and right now am eating my lunch at the computer. And now I see that same impatience and lack of focus in my kids. So, since my kids are more important than my to-do list, I am making a conscious effort these days to sit at the dining room table while eating and to limit my eating to mealtimes, to reinforce good behavior for them (they just aren’t home to see me right now!).

Not everything has to get done today / Boundaries

- To quote a client, I now know I can get back to normal. Even in the height of disorganization, I know I am capable of getting back to organized, given a little time.
- I may have time to do everything today, but only if I have a realistic idea of what I can pack into my 16-18 waking hours today.
- My very long To-Do list has a number of things that can wait until tomorrow, or even next week.
- Taking Care of Business Tuesdays: I have assigned every Tuesday morning as time for the business of my business. Setting aside time to focus just on client care and business tasks ensures that care and those tasks get done. Setting aside that time means I have to maintain boundaries, and ensure that other non-business tasks do not creep in. So, errands, personal phone calls, etc., are left for another day.
- Cleaning / Home day has been relegated to Friday. Anything house related, other than general maintenance and laundry, happens Friday. Cleaning, deliveries, services, etc. And no other day of the week.

Any progress towards a goal is still time well spent.

- How can I improve on every day? Let’s say I want to cultivate a love of music in my kids. Pretty lofty goal, but simply setting up a morning play list on the iPod can move us towards that goal.
- I want to lose 20 pounds and lower my cholesterol. Can I do both of those by bedtime tonight? Certainly not. But walking to pick up the kids at school, or making wise choices at meal times are still steps towards the goal.

The Myth of Multi-tasking.

- I am a certified professional organizer. I’m college educated, civic-minded, passionate about ministries, an avid reader. I own my own successful business, have 3 great kids and a really great husband, keep a tidy and cozy home. In theory, I am really good at multitasking. And I occasionally wonder if I am going crazy, or perhaps I’m already there, and this life is all an illusion.
- Multitasking is a myth, and if we don’t realize this, we run the risk of thinking we really can successfully do a million things at the same time. And we can’t. My spouse defines it as “doing many things poorly”.
- I have recently heard Multi-tasking called “switch tasking” (and if anyone knows to whom I can give credit for that term, met me know). The point is, our brains really cannot focus on two complicated tasks at once. What is really happening is quick mental switches between the complicated tasks, which means neither task actually gets full attention or done as well as possible.
- Our brain is capable of a lot, don’t get me wrong. I recently read an article on “Monkey-Mind” by Lynn Scheurell. The term monkey mind comes from Buddhist monks to describe our racing thoughts, and it aptly describes my thought process some mornings! But the author states that our brain is there to help us survive and problem solve. So, if given the time and the information, our monkey mind will come up with solutions for us.
- So, I challenge you: Do only one important thing at a time, & let your brain do the work it is designed to do!

Other people’s priorities for today are not my priorities for today.

- I rarely answer my home phone when I working from home. And I tend to filter my business calls, too. My productivity requires some focus on the task at hand, and answering the phone is about other people’s productivity.
- I am getting better about my emails, too, and answering them when I am done with my tasks instead of as they come.
- If we only re-act to the wants and needs of others, we rarely accomplish what we set out to do. This is not as cold hearted as it sounds, I do re-act when necessary, but I also try to respect my own boundaries.
- And now that I have focused on this article for today, I can move on to other people’s priorities for tomorrow!