

Chapter 10 (The Plan)

Time is free, but it's priceless. You can't own it, but you can use it. You can't keep it, but you can spend it. Once you've lost it you can never get it back- Harvey McKay

What foolproof plan could possibly avoid creating wasted time? The quote above seems to answer that question. If I gave you a present then it's not mine anymore. It's yours! Years ago, someone gave me a few monetary gifts. They helped me a lot and I was very grateful. Years later I split up with my first wife. She took the money saying it was hers. The money was freely given but (I suppose) it was never really mine. However, once you give something away, it's not yours anymore either. Time is given and time is taken. Was that time ever really yours? Yet, if it is yours to do with as you, please, how then can we avoid making wasted time of it? Could you build a full proof plan?

I have talked at length through this book about the time we have been given. The bulk of that time is well spent. It's yours to use. When it becomes wasted time it's another matter. Eating ice-cream is worth it. Holding hands in the rain is a great use of time. Each of us have so many good memories. The wasted ones? Well, they need to be understood, analyzed and then tossed out. Treat them like emails or Facebook notifications. Most of the time we stop just for a second to read them. We can scroll through the countless memory notifications too. All we do on social media is either trash or save. We can also do that with past memories. It's like this. Someone calling me a loser: trash! A nice person telling me I can't: trash! Your Ex saying, they love you in the rain: save! The birth of my kids with the Ex: save! You get the idea.

I think the answer (dealing with wasted time) lies somewhere within what we do with our memories. Wasted time begins by deciding what life events to trash and what to save? People tend to keep all of it. Unfortunately, that tends to create an incredibly messed up pile of hopes, dreams, memories, and feelings all mashed together. Sometimes the bad memories end up piled up on top of all the good ones. You might decide to sit down in your easy chair and relive some

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of those great memories that you have, but you inadvertently end up leafing through the bad ones first. In a way, those memories become a repeat offender. Hurting you over and over again. We need something or someone to make sense of memories, hopes, dreams, and feelings. How long it takes you to find the right ones might be considered wasted time.

Let's introduce the memory librarian. At night most of us go to sleep at a reasonable time. Our memory librarian is sifting through the day's events while deciding where to put things. They send a kiss to the "warm feelings" folder and put the "that hurt" memory in the right spot. Some stuff gets trashed right then and there. Other memories tend to linger as the librarian searches for a place to put it while we dream. I have often thought that our dreams are really our memory librarian at work. This librarian is the one who tries to make sense of it all.

My daughter is autistic. One of the quirks of autism is attached to her memory librarian. Through the day my daughter is gathering images and memories just like everyone else. Let's throw in some questions and answers that we all ponder. Now, the autistic librarian is a different cat. She does not spend the day putting all my daughters' recorded memories in order. Instead, she starts work when the autistic person goes to bed. At bed time, the autistic person piles all of the day's events on the desk for the librarian. What do you think happens to a large pile of unorganized memories? For us (so called) normal people, our librarian is filing and sifting throughout the daylight hours. Generally, a clean slate puts us to sleep at night. The autistic person lies in bed helping the librarian file stuff. It takes a ton of time. Thus, they take a long time to fall asleep because the sorting take way more time than the average person.

Some would classify a normal person as having a functioning librarian. Their filing system is relatively intact and in order. The autistic librarian; however, is overwhelmed by the mountain of memories, feelings, and questions that were not dealt with during the day. On top of that, the

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autistic person has a hard time labeling things properly. It causes a train wreck all night in the library. What I'm driving at is that each of us wants to place our hope, dreams, memories, and feelings in the best place possible. We don't want to pass stuff off into a junk drawer. Wasted time is created when we get stuck in a memory. It's possible we could place the wrong feeling on a life event. Once we start down that road it tends to take more and more time away from living a good life. We get bogged down sorting through life's messes, thus creating wasted time.

This is not just an autistic problem. The so-called normal person has errors in their library too. Oddly enough, a serial killer might have death filed in their happy folder. A depressed person possibly has put far too many bad memories in their happy folder. I met someone who rubbed me the wrong way. Where did that first encounter go? I might have been over the moon for a new car. Within months it becomes a lemon. How do those feelings get filed? I think that's how we get mixed messages sometimes. Mixed feelings! What is a poor memory librarian to do?

Let's look into your memory library. Over time, some of our memories don't get filed properly. They were not trashed or saved in the right place. It's good to have a trash bin. It's also good to have a "pending drawer." A place for confusing thoughts. I am a finisher. I like to wrap things up. I also love to understand what went wrong. Some memories need to be in the pending drawer. In time, our librarian sorts it out. What happens when we jam that drawer full of trash? Trash that we need to let go of? People tend to stall. It's like the computer freezing. The icon just goes round and round as it's searching for the right place to go. What if getting stuck in life is really caused by a confused librarian in our head? She wants to trash it but we want to hang on. We tell the librarian to be patient, so we do nothing to resolve certain issues. All we're really doing is making a mess in the library. Freezing the librarian by sending her around and around in circles. It might take a lot of wasted time to clean things up.

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People love to quote that God takes his time. God took just seven days to create the earth so we are told. That seems pretty fast to me. Yet, they also say that he has a plan. That plan might be orderly, and efficient. What could have taken thousands of years took God just seven days. Parliaments around the world take forever to enact common sense laws and bills. What could have been done on the spot in an orderly way takes forever in government. Are politicians stuck in a rut? What if the legislative community is stuck in bureaucracy? It appears that being stuck is a human trait. Let's face it, people tend to take a long time to get things done. What if we are inadvertently making it so hard for the memory librarian to do anything? We refuse to trash stuff. Do we make the librarians job harder than it needed to be? God took seven days. Sometimes we take years and years to fix our messes.

In chapter five I talked about three people who were stuck. Why is twenty-eight years in a terrible marriage a bad thing? I can't imagine someone being stuck in a rut for twenty plus years. If your car gets stuck, do you leave it? Do you just move on and buy a new car instead? What if that one gets stuck too? I tend to look at us spinning our wheels in another way. Stuck means move. Why don't you try something different? Pull yourself out of the rut! Yes, time is needed to sort out our feelings and memories into their proper place. Yet, memory librarians don't get stuck. We do, and then we refuse to put things in their proper place. That includes trashing some haunting memories.

How could a librarian do their job perfectly? They most likely would look in different folders for the right fit. Our librarian might make a new folder with a new category. How do library card filing systems get bigger than one drawer? Is it more books or more folders? The answer is that usually librarians just make new places to put things. Is it possible that someone gets stuck in a bad relationship because they couldn't sort through their feelings or decide what is right and

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wrong? Possibly their library of feelings and memories is cluttered and looks to be in bad shape. Did the pending drawer turn into a junk drawer?

How to fix the library 101. I have recently found a new love for the blues. I did not really have a memory of that type of music before. Do I file it under music or fun? What happens when I made a blues folder? Eventually, I move more of my favorite music into the blues folder because it belongs there. I didn't realize how much blues music I had until I made a more defined folder. Then I took all my other music and put it all in their rightful place.

One day I felt like listening to rock and roll. Do I feel like the blues? No! I want to rock! So, to the rock folder I go. Another day I need the blues to feel somber and relaxed. Let's seek out my memories for the blues folder. It's all music, yet how did I find the right music for my mood or day? I made better folders. Some music is also filed under divorce and pain. I don't need to flip through those to find happy music. That is why you must move forward and do new things. Being stuck tries nothing. It keeps a limited number of folders. Stuck people just keep flipping through the pile of happy, sad, painful, and angry albums all at the same time. It's painful and exhausting while trying to find the right stuff, so we quit trying. We get stuck! It's time for a better filing system! Otherwise, your just wasting time being sad when you should be happy.

This seems like an abstract concept but hear me out. I like camping, the blues, Disneyland, and chicken. We get stuck in life when we attach divorce to camping or the blues. Yet, you loved that music. Some of the best times were spent camping. Don't add pain and disappointment to the things you love. Each memory and life event needs its place. Why tarnish the best in life by adding the worst? It takes effort and it takes fortitude, but you must separate feelings, pain, disappointment and heartbreak from the things you love. Otherwise, you might be stuck. It's time to rearrange your memory library.

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Today we are going to help out our library by adding an assistant. This assistant is you! The goal is not to toss all the past memories or slide misunderstood feelings into the junk drawer. It's about putting things in their proper place. Do you want to be happy then go get happy music? You need to remember a lost loved one, then go back into those sad but memorable experiences. The assistant will help your librarian put things in better folders. This filing system is not that hard. The big question is, are you willing to let go of the trash? Will you let the librarian put things in their proper place? Quit dwelling on the pile! Let's begin to put things away during the day. Not on New Year's Eve or late at night! We know that never works.

How can we assist the librarian? We could help file our own memories and feelings; it's not rocket science, is it? Yet, if it was that easy then why don't more people do it? Part of the problem is how we treat the librarian. We give her a drink. How will a drunk librarian file anything in its proper place? We give them drugs so they relax and pass it off until tomorrow. Maybe we tell the librarian how to do their job. Just bury my Ex deep in past memories (yet, there still there on the table). I'm sure we put our librarian in a terrible spot. We give them impossible odds in how to get the job done properly. Then one day those misfiled memories find themselves in your hand. Why else do people have seemingly random meltdowns for all the wrong reasons? It's misfiled events and feelings popping up in all the wrong places!

Here is a really good example of the mess we make. A friend of mine had a baby. Her spouse had politely asked the expectant mother to get an abortion. She ignored the request and had the baby anyways. What's the harm of a little conflict while having a baby? The harm comes through the lack of communication and politeness. It's creating wasted time by not having honest and serious dialogue in the beginning. Then (surprise, surprise) in comes baby number two. Again, he asks her to get an abortion. There we stand right back at the beginning. How much

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wasted time will be spent in the future if those children get a sniff that dad wanted to abort them? Is their marriage a firm foundation of trust, honesty, and rowing in the same direction? Which way are they rowing? Together, they don't have a clue, they never talked about it.

Just for a second let's look again at being stuck. On a trail, in the forest, you might get lost. You are staring at the "you are here" sign. Where is here? You could waste time retracing your steps. It might work or you might just find yourself deeper in the forest. It's safer to sit tight and wait. Yet, you might be lost for a very long time. Just go looking for a way out. Again, you may end up deeper in the forest. What to do? What if you had taken a plan or map with you in the first place? Organized a better hike!

Back to the librarian. Our inability to communicate handcuffs the filing system. You're telling your librarian to not file it. More than likely you're asking her to compromise, be polite and passive. The elephant in the room is still there. All the resentful feelings and memories are being built up in one mother of a pile. Usually, at night, there you lay in bed wishing for better days. Mulling over and over how life is going the wrong way. That's where lack of sleep comes in. The bed becomes a battle ground instead of a playground. You are creating wasted time right then and there. The inability to deal with it now will seep into the future. You might find yourself standing (in the forest) of regret, looking at that stupid "you are still here" sign, while not having a clue where you are.

Oh, we could file during the day but that requires being real with yourself. You could be taking a hard look in the mirror assessing your situation, feelings, and addressing them now. The inability to deal with stuff on the spot is half the problem. That's how unaddressed feelings about one baby turns into two babies which sadly will end in divorce or being stuck for twenty-eight years. There is a way to avoid these types of things. Plan a way to have babies the right way.

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Plan and navigate your life on better terms. Why lay there burying your hopes and dreams in a woeful mess of regret and anger. Maybe we need a better plan? A life map that leads the way.

Why have a life map or a plan? Is it wise to put your life and your children's lives in question marks? Questions like *will the abortion issue work itself out? Are both parents on the same page about life? Is your marriage promising? What about careers, long term goals, and fulfilling life long dreams?* Oh, Patrick, they can wait. Yes, they can. You might live on average 71.5 years. Is waiting twenty-eight years to fix a marriage worth the wait? Are the scars of divorce worth the wait? What about those nagging hopes and dreams that both people in the marriage have? Why does divorce happen? Those hopes and dreams can't wait. Dialogue, it's all about dialogue.

You are the assistant. Yes, you are! The one person who could help the librarian is you. Who knows your feelings better? Who remembers what you did and who you are? It's you! Then the question arises "didn't I get myself into this messed up filing system in the first place?" That is subjective, but I will say sort of. People will always make good and bad decisions. It's human to make mistakes. People do get buried in life's trials. Sometimes we get lost. The library gets over loaded with confusing piles of memories, feelings, and lost dreams. Sometimes we foolishly add to the mess by refusing to deal (daily) with the pile as it grows ever bigger. Isn't it really you who turned one baby into two? It's not really important who made the mess. My question is who is best served to fix it now? It's you!

Someone said this remark "we need to run towards our fears to overcome them." To tackle our mistakes, head on. No matter if you go to therapy or counseling "you" must be the one who changes the path you're on. People like myself can only offer you a way through. You must make the first step. We need you to run into your library as the brave assistant. You need to be the one who helps sort out your life's messes. It can be done! It begins with you.

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The plan begins with the desire to sort out where you have been and where you want to go. That includes deciding that you don't want to go back into despair, heartbreak, and depression. Who really wants to be more lost in the forest? You don't want to spend another second reliving old wounds. How to get at your dreams? How to turn wasted time into productive time? The first thing you can do is become that very assistant I am telling you about. The librarian asks you what to do with this pile of lost feelings, hopes, and dreams that have been filed in the wrong place. It's now up to you to help put them in their proper spot. For example, imagine being in a marriage where your insecurities seem to hinder you. What if you put those feelings in the right place? They don't belong in the marriage folder. You could place them in "fears to work on". A project file in the pending drawer. What happens? Suddenly your marriage isn't the problem, your fears are.

How do your dreams fit into this mess? We have feelings about our dreams and desires. The problem arises when we file them under "ridicules", "unimportant", "selfish", and "for me only." They get buried under everything you never filed. How do we find ourselves in a midlife crisis? It's by searching for those dreams, yet you can't find them. Further to this is that some of those dreams have other files in there too. Babies got filed under education at university. Drinking problems ended up filed under relationships. I would even say that some files got duplicated (like insults and depression). These are inadvertently put in your marriage and dreams folder. You see, dreams don't look that important in the baby folder or the depression section. You and the librarian could look through it all to make sure everything is put in its proper place. Once done, I can't imagine the relief you would feel. Finding the freedom to breath all of a sudden.

Let's begin!

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By yourself (only) you need to pull out a pen and paper. These are your dreams. They are your feelings and your perspective on life. Someone else can't accurately tell you how you feel or how to file them. I love the blues now. My wife would have tossed them in the trash. It's my new thing. She is a medical woman. I'd have trashed a ton of that. She remembers names. I tend to remember events more than names. This new journey needs to begin with you. That does not begin with you trashing people or jobs in your life. It does not! It does; however, begin at a table with you alone, sifting through the pile one at a time.

As a Christian, I'd encourage you to pray about it for a few minutes. If that's not your way then just take some time to dive into the past. What did you dream of being in grade nine? Walk through the whole year. Let's say that you hit a bad memory. Leave it for now. Just walk along the year writing down everything that made you happy. Who were you then? What music did you like? What did you do for fun? Why did you like certain friends and movies? From there move into grade ten through twelve. Did you change? You liked country but ended up loving rock. Did a book inspire you? This is way more than just a positive thing. We're not only looking at positive thoughts to make you feel happy. I want you to dig for those dreams and desires that you miss and loved, then put them in their own pile.

You get to help the librarian for a day. How to train the librarian 101? Give them a new filing system. The old one was not working. Take all these dreams and put them in smaller piles. Ask yourself questions like what have you accomplished? What have you forgotten about? Rate your dreams, hopes, and desires. What could you do now and what needs work to accomplish? Nothing is trash! Don't file a thing. Just look at these smaller piles. One by one go through them again. Remember! Look past the feelings and insecurities. Just look at all the different piles of

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hopes, dreams, and memories. Look in the happy pile and the fun stuff you loved. They made you smile, right? We will file these things properly, just not quite yet.

Some things you will have forgotten. They are covered in past anguish and life's messy business. I loved being a DJ in my early twenties. Life, babies, and marriage covered that passion up. I mentioned before that my church has asked me to run their livestream. It's about video, music, and a playlist. Oh, how I had forgotten how much I love being a DJ. They call me the live stream DJ now. I feel so alive creating the livestream each and every week. It's me! Why would you say that old dreams are gone? That they are not important anymore. Is it too late to chase them now? In some way and somehow your childhood dreams are still alive. Are you so sure they can't be done? Who says they are dead until you try? Until you begin to dream again. It's not wasted time attempting to put the real you back together.

Again, what is forgotten? What is buried deep? You need to make the list. What felt good? What were your impossible dreams? Is there something you hoped that you'd become? Write them all down. It's time to take that list and go for a long walk and just think about those dreams on the page. Why didn't they happen? How much did you love those thoughts? Immerse yourself in the dreams. Try and feel what it would be like to be doing them. What would hoping for a bright future look like? If you were to complete some unfinished dreams right now, what would that look like?

This is what you've started. The ball is rolling now. Do you miss your hopes and dreams? What would happen if you made them important? So important that your life and your dreams were number one. Disclaimer! Pushing important priorities aside to get those dreams moving is not good for you or anyone else. You might have sacrificed yourself for others along this life path but you can't sacrifice others to get what you need now. "You" sacrificed one person

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already (yourself) to allow those dreams to get lost. Nobody held a gun to your head. This new journey is about recognizing the importance of fulfilling dreams. It's also important to share those desires with another. Like I mentioned before, I never asked the Ex for help. I never offered her a chance to see my dreams.

It was so important for you to find your dreams. To bring them back them back to life with wonder and magic. You daydreamed of doing amazing things. Think of that magical place where you could do anything. Every time I go to Disneyland, I head straight over the kiddie rides. My best childhood memories are found riding dumbo and traveling through the air on a pirate ship. It's my happy place where dreams could come true. It wasn't so long ago that you had forgot that magical place. You thought there was nothing you could do. So, which is it? You can't or you can? There is no time to be wasted anymore. No time to hold yourself back.

These good memories, hopes, and dreams that need a proper place in your life. A happy place. Just look over them all. What have you done and what do you still want to achieve? As long as you're breathing there is still time. As a teenager, I picked up my friend from the airport a bunch of times. Every year he went to Hawaii. I dreamed about Hawaii. It was terribly disheartening to pick him up all the time. About twenty years later I found a way to be on his beach in Oahu. The joy I felt was beyond imagine as I gazed at Diamondhead crater while standing on Waikiki beach. My heart was always pointed towards my dreams. Then I went there!

If you started over from this moment on how would life be different? Some people blindly flee into another relationship to avoid pain and reflection. Instead, I am asking you to run into the arms of two people. The first is you. Find happiness within yourself. You have great hopes and dreams. Imagine spending time with the best version of yourself. Secondly, find someone who will listen to you. Go out for dinner or a walk with them. Share your dreams,

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hopes, and desires. Give them time to come on board. Heaven's sake! Do it for them too. Talk with them about their dreams. Ask them to help you make a plan moving forward. Hockey player Wayne Gretzky said "a shot not taken is a goal not scored." What if two people helped each other fulfill their dreams, hopes, and desires? Ask and do! Don't sit on the bench.

I will not spend time with people who say no all the time. For me it's never no. I'm sorry if you think your no is final. In my world that word is an opportunity to say yes. I just needed a way to turn no into maybe, and maybe into yes. Again, for me, no means it won't happen. Are you so sure that no is really, no? What if their no means not yet. In my world no means "find a way." It's like this: If you don't try then it won't happen. If you die it won't happen either. I'm sure the Wright brothers were told "no" man cannot fly. Was there an engineering genius at Nasa who was told that space travel was impossible? No, is never no!

I don't want you to think about wasted time. Let's not consider all the trouble in years gone by as relevant. But... you said? I know, I said we do need to look at the past. To see what happened. I said that so that we do look. That we do consider past trends. Yet, our dreams are in the past. They are sitting there cluttered under other stuff. We need to find them. Let's not stay in the past for more than a few minutes. It's past and gone. Let's not get caught looking, wondering, and missing the things we didn't do. That could end up morphing into more wasted time. But... don't dwell there! Pick up the pieces and run into the future with them!

Many of those past disappointments do create a future that spends time crying, missing, and remembering the bad stuff. How much time is wasted wallowing in the past? Unfortunately, many of us do that far too much. Yes, we can't irradiate memories. There is no way to undo what has been done. Yet, could we take that time spent wallowing and use it in a different way? What if we spent that time building a bright future? I have said that wasted time is created by bad

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decisions. It's true that there will be time spent regretting or wondering why. I could say that it is not time well spent. Yes, sometimes we need to cry, yet crying about a loss is not proactive. What if you grieved a small amount of time over a love one but spent more time loving the special memories instead? My mother and me had a ton of terrible memories. She is gone but I miss her humor, her view on things, and care free attitude. It's not all bad. About those bad memories? Should I hate her forever and despise a few terrible incidents. I chose to file my mom under adventure and innovation and not under disappointment.

The plan is simple. As the assistant, you can direct your memory librarian on where things should go. Terrible moments with mom are gone. In my case she has passed away. Why hold on to those bad memories. I choose to trash the ones I don't want in her folder. Instead, I move her good times to my happy folder. I know this sounds weird but it has really helped me organize pain, frustration, and disappointment. Is it really that simple to remove bad memories? They are never really gone, but you can change your feelings towards them. I have good times and bad times with my first marriage. I have chosen to remember the good times. I suppose to paint her in a better light. How do I do it?

This is how we are going to end this book. Wasted time is built on dwelling. Being stuck in a memory or time period. I have asked you to sift through all your memories. I hope you made piles of dreams, hopes, feelings, and events. Further to this, did you make smaller piles based on good times and bad times. Why do you remember this thing a certain way? In your library are these piles. The best part now is that you have dissected them. They are all sitting in their proper category. A trip to Hawaii was filed under "I wish." Now it's filed under "I did." My Ex was filed under "painful divorce." Now I have placed her under "past friendships", "walking in the rain", and "first kiss." It's flipped my head on dwelling too much on the negative.

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I'm going to call the next chapter "execute." It's on purpose. We are going to execute unnecessary memories. Place them in the trash bin. Gone forever? No, but they will have a changed title. Further to this is your dreams. We need to bring them to the front. In the past you may have had terrible feelings filed under marriage. Those feelings probably entered into your second marriage. Let's find a way to remove them. You have done the work as the library assistant. Taking all the clutter and putting order to it. How to make a plan work? You have to execute the plan. Not kill it but enact it. No plan enacts itself. Someone has to push the button, start the motion, or begin the journey. Let's enact your plan now.