



Seeing Through the Illusions of Time

by Christine Thomas

One of my friends says her husband has "buffet anxiety". He gets so anxious when they go to any kind of all-you-can-eat type of buffet that he becomes immobilized. It is too difficult for him to decide what and how much to eat. In the face of so much abundance and so very many good tasting things, he can't decide what to do. In the past he has way overeaten, chosen the wrong dishes and regretted it, wanted to make sure he has gotten his money's worth, gotten things on his plate that he didn't want and yet felt obligated to eat, or missed out on what someone else said was the best dish offered. As I giggle about his dilemma, I realize that the buffet anxiety metaphor is perfect for our lives today. In this country at this time we are enjoying the most outrageously abundant buffet imaginable and most of us struggle with finding the time to experience it all.

Often people come to coaching wanting to change the pacing of their action pack, oh so full lives. We zoom from one thing to the next, begging for a few more hours each day and for several more hours of sleep each night. We live in mind-boggling abundance and yet we feel the constant lack of the commodity needed to enjoy it all: time.

Many wise and successful people have written gobs telling us all about the things we need to know in order to "manage" our time. There are tips and techniques we can learn from them, like making master lists, prioritizing, time blocking, delegating or dumping, or setting time boundaries. There are all kinds of systems we can employ depending on our preferences - you may be familiar with several of them - from palm pilots to day timers to index cards. It helps each of us to find and use practical tools that give structure to this dragon we're riding.

In order to make changes that last, I need the big picture, the concepts, as well as the hands-on tools. Here are some of the bigger picture ideas that have helped me to move closer to a sustainable pace of living:

Regularly stop and get the hawk view - the far view of what's happening. This involves quieting my mind a bit and imagining I am a bird of prey soaring over my life.

From this high view I can see my life below. I can see where I've been, where I am now, and have more of a sense of where I'm going. I get out of the details and the urgent long enough to see what's really important. I take time to remember my values, my purpose, my passion, my dreams. I can check in with myself from this perspective to see what I'm paying attention to and what I'm not. What I'm doing and where I'm going looks very different from the hawk view than from the mouse view - the shoulder to it, deep in huge details of daily life, view.

Live in terms of cycles and flow. From the hawk view I can notice patterns and cycles. All of the natural world lives in cycles, not in straight lines of ever increasing production. Life sprouts, grows, blossoms, fruits, dies, decomposes, lays dormant, and seeds sprout again. Seasons move from spring to summer to fall and winter, then to spring again. We need times of darkness and incubation as well as times of wild, full growth. Recognizing and honoring cycles in our lives does much to return our relationship with time to one that can be sustained. We can attune ourselves more to earth's cycles or we can flow with other cycles we notice in our lives. For those of us with children the traditional school calendar is a cycle we can work with, designing our work and home schedules to be in sync with this. If there is no down part of the cycle, no rest, no return to the dark, no time to reflect, then there is no time for renewal. Unchecked growth is unsustainable. Without a built in time to renew, systems will renew themselves, usually in some form of collapse or crisis or eruption.

Let your heart and soul have a say. Most of my time troubles come from my head. My thinking mind tells me all the things I should do: how to be successful, how my house/body/bank account/car/business/.....needs to be, what I must be in control of, what I absolutely have to do to avoid utter disaster. My monkey mind has an infinite to do list. And my mind has a completely warped view of time. It tells me I can write a book, work with clients, clean the house, do the laundry, take care of all the sick birds and children, meditate, do yoga, walk, feed my family, and seduce my husband - all today, all while being serene and wise, all without breaking a sweat!

Our hearts know much better than our heads about how to spend our precious time. Our hearts know who and what we love, how we are here to live our passion. One thing that

my heart reminds me of is gratitude. I have so very much. I do not have to spend hours walking to find clean water or food or firewood. My schedule is often so full just because of all the wonderful things my family and I get to have or experience. Opportunities and abundance fill our days and nights. For all of this I am profoundly grateful. When I stay thankful for all that is "on my plate" I shift out of thinking of time as a scarce resource.

Our souls know we have purpose. There are reasons why we are here, right now, in our rich and full lives, reasons that sometime get hidden behind all the to-dos. Crisis often resets our inner compasses, reminding us in jarring ways of just why we're here and what we need to be paying attention to. But we can stop and reconnect with our souls, with spirit - in whatever way we perceive that - now, without waiting for a crisis to force us to do so.

Many of the tasks we have before us seem light years away from anything connected to our heart or soul, don't they? Cleaning the kitty litter, being on endless hold waiting for tech support, interacting with people whose values are diametrically opposed to ours, working in situations that de-power us, facing the obligations we detest - add your own personal favorite to this to-do list of the mundane. All of these could seem to be way out of the realm of the heart and soul unless we look deeper. Often in the looking deeper we can reconnect to the meaning or we can wake up to what has no business being on our chore list at all.

Here are some of the questions I ask myself and others about how we use the time we have in ways that are satisfying, meaningful, and productive:

- Who cares? Do I really care about this or am I on auto pilot?
- What difference will this make in the big picture?
- What do I really want here?
- How am I living my values in this moment?
- Will this matter next week? Next month? Next year?
- How is this moving us/me towards the future I envision?
- What is the timing right for now? What needs to wait until the timing is more

opportune?

- What do I risk by doing this now? What do I risk by not doing this now?
- What am I not willing to risk in this?
- How is this choice I am making about my time reflecting my life purpose?
- How am I living my spiritual beliefs?
- In what ways am I distracting myself from what's really important?
- What's motivating me?
- Who am I trying to please here?
- Am I making time for nurturing myself and my loved ones? Am I making time for joy?
- If I knew I had a limited time to live what choices would I make about how to spend my time?
- Is what I'm doing contributing to the legacy I wish to leave? What stories will my loved ones tell about me and how I was with time?
- How is this challenge with time my ally? What am I learning here?
- Are these choices building up my spirit or tearing it down?
- What would the wise one inside me say about me and time?
- What help do I need here? Who can I ask to help me? Am I trusting others around me to show up fully capable or am I care-taking?
- What assumptions am I making? Are they true?
- What would it take for me to look back on this day with gratitude and satisfaction, knowing that I really lived the gift of it?
- Am I living my passion, co-creating my life with the Divine?
- How am I being compassionate with myself and others?
- What am I willing to give up for now in order to accomplish a bigger goal?
- What am I saying no to? What am I saying yes to?

There are so many questions we could ask and so many ways we could look at how we live our time. As more and more information, opportunities, people, and stuff fill our lives we need to develop solid skills for separating the meaningful from the distracting. We must be able to see through the illusions that keep us always out of breath, always running, always short of time, in order to fully enjoy the buffet offered to us.

© **Christine Thomas, CPCC, ORSCC - All Rights Reserved**

If you have other ideas or questions about this article, I'd love to hear from you. Or if you'd like a free sample coaching session email me - **christine@hawkview.net**.

If you'd like to share this with someone, please do and please keep my name and email address on it. If this was sent to you and you want to find out more about personal life coaching or relationship coaching with me, visit my website:
<http://www.hawkview.net/>.

