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Deleted Chapter from the first draft of *The Not So Big Life*

By Sarah Susanka, 2007

It's About Time

But there never seems to be enough time

To do the things you want to do

Once you find them.

—Jim Croce, lyrics from *Time In a Bottle*

The Time Challenge

In this chapter, we're going to look at how our patterns of behavior affect our experience of time and our quality of life. The question must undoubtedly be arising, "How do I do this? How do I live in this new way, given all the things I have on my plate?" The short answer is that you can't do it by making a plan. And it won't work simply to throw away the structure of the life you have now, and try to start over. That will only lead to another version of what you are living today. The steps to the life you long for must be taken in the moment, just like everything else. Now is the only access door to change. But there are some things you can do to make this new way of living easier to implement, and a lot of these have to do with slowing down the pace of your movie, even if only slightly to start with.

When I first began writing this chapter, I wanted to get some feedback from a number of people about how they live their lives with respect to time. I thought that by asking say, a male business executive with a couple of kids, a single working mom, a married, stay-at-home mother, a young entrepreneur, and a middle aged building contractor, I'd be able to learn about the various ways that people over-extend themselves. My supposition was that with all our rushing, we lose all hope of becoming present. I thought that finding places in our lives to slow down should bring with it more opportunities for living in the moment.

So with this in mind, I set about creating a vehicle that would allow me to gather the data I needed. I developed something I dubbed "The Time Challenge," a set of time "maps" as I called them—charts for recording a representative day and week, as well as one super-busy hour as it actually happened, rather than as it was originally planned. (You can print out The Time Challenge for yourself from

the [Chapter Resources page](#) on the website, but I recommend that you read the chapter first). Although we often use a calendar to plan our future, we almost never look back on what actually happened to see how our time really passed. I was beginning to suspect that our collective sense of exhaustion is in large part due to this oversight. If we're always *previewing* and never *reviewing*, is it any wonder that we feel as though we're always playing catch-up? It's as though we are collectively leaning into the future, always desiring to fill the container to the brim, and not realizing that we are actually in a constant state of overflow. My supposition was that this Time Challenge exercise would allow me to see how others filled their time buckets in their particular waking dream.

I sent the exercise out to a selection of sixty people from my computer's email address book—people ranging from my next-door neighbor to someone I'd met only once by phone but whom I knew lived in the New York City fast lane. I believed I'd found a good representative cross section of the population, and I was looking forward to seeing the results of the exercise.

With the exercise distributed, and out of my hands for a couple of weeks, I set about writing the chapter after this one while I waited for the results to arrive. It wasn't until the appointed day that I started to sense something was "up"...that I was about to learn a thing or two about time and how we use it that I hadn't anticipated.

The first response came from a woman—a business consultant—who works out of her house, and whom I know quite well. Ever since I first met Sandy, she has impressed me as being highly organized and capable of keeping her world relatively unstressed by taking on only as much as she is confident she can accomplish without any major headaches. Her time maps were clear and easy to read, and included dinner every night with her family, a regular call to her elderly mother-in-law, and time every day for reading. I found it interesting to see that the only way I could guess at the level of stress in her day was from the relaxing things she'd built in to her day, which I assumed were for her own growth and enjoyment. A call to her confirmed this, but where my assumption was that she'd planned in the reading time, she didn't perceive it this way. It wasn't a planned activity. It simply happened when everything else was done. It seemed that her relationship to time wasn't stressful—at least not currently. But in the recent past, she told me in a follow up email, she'd felt both unsettled and rushed when a project she was working on turned into a significant headache. Here's how she described it:

“The past two years were abnormally busy. During this time I also had limited control over my own deadlines, I bore the weight of a lot of responsibility for a large number of people, and my efforts were not always appreciated. I felt burdened and controlled by time. I found myself noticing time a lot. How much, how little, how fast... Sometimes, I even wondered if my efforts to catch up with it actually made everything worse. The good news is that that phase has passed, now that the project is complete.

I have had other times in my life when I was probably as busy, but the burden was different, because there was appreciation shown for what I was doing, which in turn allowed me to enjoy the work. At that time I felt at ease, with at least some sense of space and freedom, so that time didn't seem like an enemy. It was, rather, a friend to be cherished and enjoyed. I didn't have to think about it very much.”

As we discussed her experience of time in a follow up call, it became apparent that she much preferred the calm, controlled unfolding of things that I'd assumed to be her typical experience based on her time maps. Whenever her life sped up, she felt uncomfortable, and believed that she needed to “do” something to fix it. That effort almost always backfired.

Nowadays though, she didn't think about rushing, and didn't worry about finding time to do things for her own development. In her current world, there was always time. But I couldn't see this from the time map. I couldn't know from a listing of events and activities how it felt to inhabit her life.

A parallel from architecture came to mind. A few years ago I had a revelation about why people are so often disappointed by the houses they build for themselves. I had come to realize that people were buying plans for houses based on the floor plan alone, assuming that that floor plan described how the house would feel when it was built. As an architect, however, I knew that the floor plan only tells you how to get your feet from place to place, and whether there's room for the furniture you currently own. But the feeling of being in the house—what it's like to live there—isn't reflected by the floor plan, which is only a two-dimensional abstraction of a three dimensional form. For that you need more information about the heights of everything—*the third dimension*.

Now here I was once again confronted with a very similar revelation, but related to time rather than space. Very much like the floor plan of a house, these time maps were giving me only two dimensions of information—the number of discreet activities and events, and the pacing of those life “chunks” in linear time. To understand how it feels to live a particular life however, you have to know

something else about the person's *orientation* to time. Without this, you can't tell if they're calm or flustered, going with the flow or in a constant state of turmoil. This first response had given me an inkling of the primary shortcoming of the exercise. I needed to know how time was experienced by the person filling out the time maps, or they would be useless to me. The filled-in maps would all look more or less the same, because of course everyone has done *something* with every hour that's passed. I was recognizing the obvious, that there's actually no such thing as an overflowing time bucket. It may feel that way, but in fact every bucket is exactly the same size—they all contain precisely the same quantity of linear time.

Two more days passed with no further mail. In response to my original letter, several people had told me they would participate, but that had been ten days earlier. I hadn't sent any reminders, hadn't applied any other pressure. On the Sunday before the Monday deadline, I received two more time maps from the proud mother of two teenage daughters. By day their worlds were filled with the one hour increments of a high school curriculum, and were colored with comments and annotations along the way like, "French class—not quite as boring as usual", and "Cleaned kitchen while thinking about paper to write on Kafka's *The Trial*." On paper their lives seemed relatively ordered and calm, though certainly stuffed with activity. But a call to both girls revealed that Penny, the older one, felt pretty stressed by the pace of her life, while the younger one, Carla, wasn't yet experiencing the increase in expectations that her older sister associated with impending adulthood. Carla simply didn't worry about time too much, even when she was running late.

As I spoke to their mother after chatting with each of them, she told me a wonderful story that illustrates the difference in the two girls' relationships with time. Carla had suggested to Penny one evening that they not rush to make it to school on time the following day. Penny agreed that this was a great idea, so that night, she set her alarm to get up a bit earlier than usual the following morning. She was ready to leave a good ten minutes early, and looked confused when she discovered that Carla was doing exactly the same thing she normally did, and wasn't ready any earlier than usual. Hadn't they decided *not* to rush today?

What Carla had meant by her original suggestion was really, "Let's just be late tomorrow and not worry about it," while Penny had heard, "Let's be on time without having to scramble." Rushing for Penny was created by not leaving enough time to do things calmly. Rushing for Carla was created by having to be somewhere at an appointed time. Penny sees appointments as fixed and non-

negotiable, while Carla sees them as a cause for rushing, and as over-rideable. It doesn't occur to her to change her behavior to meet a deadline. Her perspective only considers whether to be late or not.

The same day I received another response from a writer who works from home. His time maps arrived complete with a visual aid—a photograph taken from his desk, where he was filling out the maps while simultaneously enjoying a late season snow fall—an image that seemed the very embodiment of a peaceful life.

Although his time maps were fully filled out, I was again fascinated to discover that his comments on the front cover, made after he'd completed the exercise, were far more revealing than the maps themselves. Although the exercise had been useful to him and, as he put it, "sobering" in how it revealed things about his life he'd previously been unaware of, his time maps told me very little. I could see that he got about seven hours of sleep a night on week days, and eight on the weekends, and I could tell that his days were organized around dropping off and picking up his teenage son, but other than that, it was simply a list of activities. He, on the other hand, had noticed after reviewing the results, that he and his wife and son spent most of their "social" time together either reading or watching television, and there was actually a lot less personal interaction than he had imagined. He also noted the toll travel had taken on his schedule—not so much while he was away, but once he returned. The ripples caused by the things that had been put off in order to accommodate the trip out of town continued on through the following three days, creating a more harried quality to those days than had he not been gone.

Finally, the official deadline for the return of the Time Challenge arrived. Only two more Time Challenge packets found their way home that day. One came from my next door neighbor—a mother of three young children, who told me when she stopped by to deliver it that though her days looked mundane, she felt incredibly fulfilled by the life she was living now when compared with her previous vocation as an office worker. The other was a response from my first non-work-at-homer, a business executive with two children, whose time maps revealed a life that included only a very limited amount of TV watching, and plenty of time in the evenings for family activities and reading.

A couple more drifted in over the following week, but my sense of the whole assignment was at this point underwhelming. I had imagined that I'd see with my own eyes how busy everyone is today, when in fact none of the people who live in that frantic fast lane had had the time to pay attention to the assignment. Not surprising, I supposed, but a bit disappointing, nonetheless. And given

what could in fact be read from the time map of someone other than its creator, maybe it was just as well. Perhaps I would have learned no more than I knew now. Even so, I held a question in my mind over the next few days. Could it be that my suppositions about time and how we feel “in” time were mistaken? Is it possible that although there’s a lot of busy-ness around these days, people are experiencing that state of affairs in many different ways? Is there in fact any consensus at all about what time is, and how we experience it?

Our Experiencing of Linear Time

I didn’t know what it was, but I was pretty sure that something in my current vision of reality was slightly off-base. I could only hold the question in intent, and see what clarifications came into my awareness. And sure enough, just a day later, those clarifications started arriving thick and fast.

First, Sam, one of my fast lane friends, came through for me, not with any time mapping, but with an email. Here’s what he told me:

“Hello Sarah.

I just found the time to write this short letter in response to your challenge. In my business life, I have been asked to do a similar exercise several times, and something inside me refuses to comply -- I just can't make myself do it. I never have the time, or don't want to know how I'm "wasting" it.

I use ACT, a software contact manager in my daily work -- it records every telephone call I make (I talked to you 3 times on Sept 5th: 1min, 11min, and 45 min) -- but I've never been able to force myself to analyze the data. ACT also tells me what time to make the calls (I sometimes have a list as long as 55 people to call) but I ignore that unless the people are counting on me, and then I use the Outlook Calendar to tell me to make those calls.

Aside from my resistance to formally analyzing how I spend my time, I thought I might give you a glimpse of a typical day, and maybe you can get some useful thoughts from it.

My routine starts at "morning time," (a baby-talk word we keep using 26 years later) which my body-alarm clock rings at exactly 6:13 AM (plus or minus a minute if I'm avoiding the workday for some reason...). The alarm clock is attached to my eyes, which open and stare at the digital clock until it rings seconds later. I walk to the coffee maker, put in 7 scoops of coffee and 5 cups of water, turn it on and take a shower. By 6:30 AM I'm reading the paper and drinking cup #1. Cup #1 brings on a trip to

the bathroom with the appropriately named "business" section, and I'm into my (*home*) office between 7:15 & 7:30 AM.

I check Outlook to get mentally ready for any of those time-dependent calls. Then I go to work in my totally disorganized manner -- checking email, notes I have in a perpetual 3-ring binder (going back 15 years) and answering the phone when it rings. I don't know what time it is unless an Outlook reminder comes up telling me to call someone, or my wife comes in and asks me if I want toast, a signal that she's taking a break and would like company. When she comes in, I'm usually on the phone.

Phone-time is a multi-tasking juggling act. I have call waiting and caller ID so, contrary to the advice of books on business etiquette, I politely put the current person I'm talking to on hold, and answer the second caller -- politely telling them their call was so important that I left my other call to tell them I'll call them back. It's not uncommon to have that happen 3 or more times within a single call -- by the third I usually feel so rude that I stop the routine, and just note the caller ID on my 3-Ring binder.

Of course my hands are free during all this phone time so I'll try to answer or at least read important emails. I get 150 a day -- about half of these are trying to sell me ways to improve the performance of my male apparatus, - - the other half is business. I have a cell phone/Treo 650 that I use on the road. It will sometimes ring during a call on my office phone, and I'll treat it as if it were another call-waiting call.

I use instant messaging too. It lets me communicate with people while I'm on the phone with other people and putting other people on hold while I'm reading emails from other people.

I don't feel stressed by all this typically, but rather challenged to "juggle better," and to have fun doing it. I must say, when the fun stops there doesn't seem to be enough time...a not uncommon occurrence in my life these days.

I continue this routine until 5:00 PM Sharp. Then it's news time. I watch the BBC news, the Network National News, and the McNeal Lehrer News Hour with one or two glasses of wine. Dinner follows. A quick check of emails, calendars, and then to bed... Out by 10:00 ."

This is what I'd been anticipating in time map form, but as I read through my friend's description of his day, I realized that it would be almost impossible to write this sort of frenzy down, interaction by interaction. It would be like trying to map the movement of a swarm of gnats at sunset--an impossibly complex task. His letter gave me a much more intelligible description of what is happening in the life of someone who is constantly and simultaneously emailing,

IM-ing, and phone calling. I had suspected as much, but had never been able to imagine what it was really like. Sam had given that world a voice.

Next came a discussion with Marie, my beloved assistant in the office, about time. Her description of her internal world was so different from anything I was familiar with that I asked her to write it down. Here's what she gave me just a short time later. It perfectly illustrates the vast difference between the universes we each inhabit. They may look similar on the surface, but the internal experience is another matter entirely. And time seems to be the major player in the orchestration of that experiencing:

“My main concern is not efficiency so much as filling the space. I am not trying to get more things done, though it is nice if that happens. I am trying to control and fill the space of time so that there is no gap, no time that goes by when my mind is unoccupied. It feels like my mind is like a mouse in an open field with a hawk overhead. The mouse must keep darting this way and that, constantly moving, because if it is still, it is an invitation for the hawk to swoop in. The hawk is harsh self-criticism and self-judgment.

For this reason, I find I'm constantly keeping the mind going at all costs, until each thought has been worn into rags, like a favorite baby blanket. It is really a form of mind pollution. It has its productive side, but I've begun to see that the “focus” that I have, where I am so completely engrossed in one thing that I can't see anything else around me, is actually the mouse burying its head in the sand. If it can't see the hawk, and can pretend it isn't there, maybe the hawk can't get it. In this way the mind's attention isn't so much on the task as it is on trying to control input, thereby protecting itself from feeling criticized, judged, and unhappy with itself.”

As I wrote this book about time, here I was sitting right next to someone who had an entirely different way of experiencing time than I do. Though I'd sensed that this was true on many occasions, I had no idea until this moment, just how different it was. As we continued to talk, Marie, with a sudden insight into what is happening in each of our lives, jumped up out of her seat, and said, “It's like this! We all live as though there's this rope going right through us.” She mimed a cord coming out of her solar plexus, and showed with her hands how it extended out behind her. “This is you.” She waltzed across the room with the imaginary cord pulling her at quite a pace, her face showing that she/I was happy and excited at the rapidity, though somewhat distracted by the speed. “And this is me.” Now she pretended that the rope was pulling her and that she was unsuccessfully resisting with all her might, her face grimacing. “This is Sandy.” Now she moved carefully across the floor in measured steps, the rope

pulling her violently from time to time, while she attempted to keep her steps perfectly measured, forcing her to lurch forward and then attempt to regain her balance. "And here's Sam," she said, juggling imaginary balls in the air as she sauntered her way along an imaginary tight rope, trying not to look down, and pretending there was no chance of falling off, while indicating with eye movements that she was at least aware of the chasm below.

Marie is expert at illustrating things with arm and hand motions, but this was her best visual depiction yet—a full body demonstration. The effect was hilarious, and also highly illuminating. As she moved, and I laughed, I experienced the epiphany I'd been waiting for: time takes on the characteristics of our own personal neuroses. It morphs into a perfectly orchestrated accompaniment to our personality. For me it is something that rushes me from this to that as I keep trying to perform to my expectations and to those of other characters in my waking dream. For Marie it is something to be filled in an attempt to control the lurking self-judgment, while resisting the flow of what's in front of her right then. For Sandy it is something with which she likes to be in a state of "controlled equilibrium," but often gets out of control. And for Sam it is something that keeps him juggling, because he knows deep down that if he stops for just one second he'll become aware of the chasm, and fall.

If all this is so, then the less we are identified with our personalities, and the less our waking dream is clouded by filters, the less we feel "done to" by time. All the rushing, resisting, controlling and juggling subsides as we move into a state of presence, and simply do what's in front of us to do. Time literally expands to encompass the unfolding moment-to-moment happenings of life, and there's absolutely no sense of reaction to it, because it isn't actually a thing at all. It's a construct we've created to allow ourselves the illusion of imposing linear order on a dimension of being that is beyond our ability to fully apprehend. And because we can't really understand it, what we experience instead is the constant companionship of our primary filter over Reality. No wonder we can't seem to get Reality to cooperate with our wishes.

Until we've let go of who we think we are by seeing through our conditioned patterns, and by metabolizing the undigested food from our past experiencing, we'll continue to be led around by the nose by the thing we call time. But just as we are not who we think we are, time is not what we think it is either. It's nothing like a bucket to be filled. Only while we are asleep in the waking dream does it have linear length and irritating characteristics. Once we wake up, it can no longer be irritating because it no longer exists in the way we think it does. It

is no longer a limitation or a metered entity. It simply IS. It is the is-ing of everything.

A Dimension Beyond Our Imagining

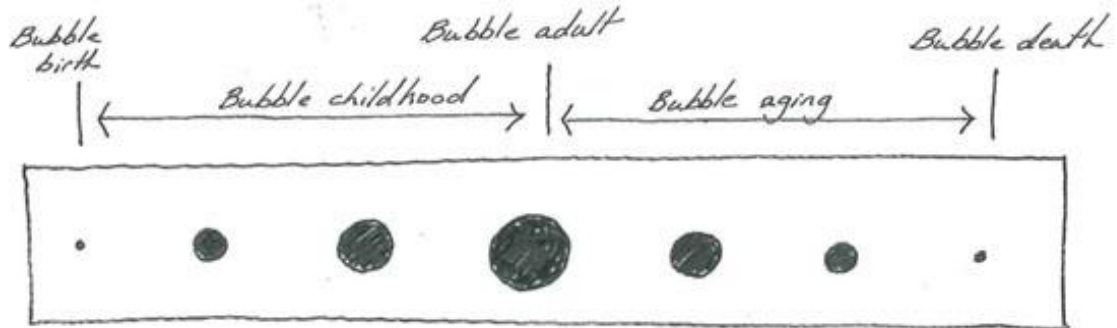
We can envision the passage of time by seeing the birth, growth, decay and eventual death of whatever it is that we are observing. This is the process of time's passing from what we think of as past through present to future. But is this birth-to-death process really what we think it is? What if there were dimensions acting upon us that we couldn't see? Scientists certainly seem to be convinced that this is the case.

There's a famous book called *Flatland*, written by Edwin A. Abbott in 1884, (and now also a wonderful animated movie, called "Flatland: The Movie" with Martin Sheen) about the experience of living in a two-dimensional world and discovering that it is possible to learn to see from a three-dimensional perspective. Everything from this new perspective is very different, and what had seemed incomprehensible mysteries of the universe in two dimensions are now revealed as simply the mechanics of a dimension beyond that of Flatland's inhabitants.

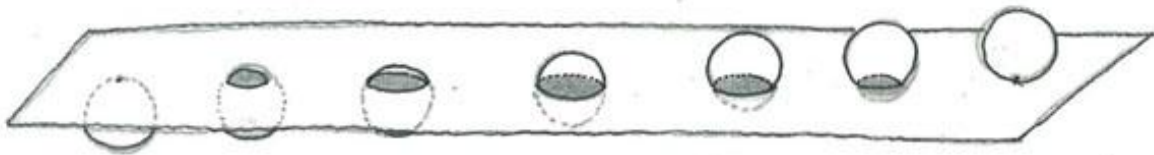
For a long time I have had the sense that time is only the appearance of how things unfold, and not actually the way they would reveal themselves to be if we could perceive from the next dimension up—from the fifth dimension. What I'm about to explain is not exactly the way things are, but rather a way for us to appreciate, metaphorically, how different things may actually be from our own three-dimensional experiencing of them. Grasp the principle involved and catch a glimpse of an entirely different experience of time. Follow along with the graphics below as you read, and it will help you to visualize the situation.

Imagine for a minute that you live in a two dimensional world—a flat plane, like a very large sheet of paper, where the only things you can perceive occur on the plane itself. Anything above or below the plane is outside your perceptual range. The process of growth in your world is therefore experienced only in two dimensions. The cycle of life for an individual starts with a dot, increases gradually to a circle of increasing size, until it reaches from 4 to 6 inches in diameter—circle maturity—at which point it recedes in diameter back down to a point, and then suddenly one day, poof, it's no longer even a dot. It's gone, and in this world of circles, that's what they call death. Sounds a lot like our view of growth, doesn't it? It's just rendered in two dimensions rather than three.

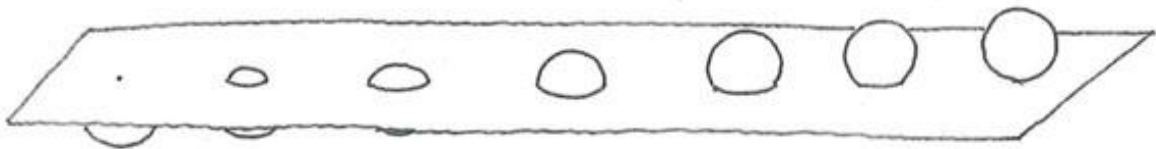
THE PLANE OF EXISTENCE



PLAN - Showing snapshots of a sphere moving through a flat plane
 - Notations above indicate the experience in 2 Dimensional existence of the life cycle of a bubble.



3D RENDERING - Showing the same process of a sphere moving through a plane
 - Shading shows the circle locations from the plan above
 - Dotted lines show sections of the sphere that are below the plane



3D RENDERING - With circles + dotted lines removed so that all you see is the sphere moving through the plane as it would appear in 3D viewing.
 - From this it is clear that although bubble existence in the plane begins + ends with a dot on the plane, the sphere itself remains unchanged.

Now look at how this phenomenon occurs in three dimensions. The third dimension reveals that what appeared to be circles appearing and disappearing on the two-dimensional plane are actually bubbles moving through the two dimensional plane, first as just a dot where the bubble touches the flat plane, then a circle as it begins to move through the plane, then back to a dot and finally nothing at all as the bubble moves. Seen from a three-dimensional perspective the thing formerly known as birth, growth, and death is actually just a three dimensional bubble passing through. Each individual bubble doesn't in fact change its shape at all. The three dimensional bubble exists always as an object 4 to 6 inches in diameter, whether it is below the plane of existence, passing through the plane of existence, or above the plane of existence. What the two-dimensional bubble people see as their life expectancy is simply the time it takes for their particular bubble to exit the plane.

Whereas two-dimensional bubble people experience their kin coming and going, and time passing between the arrival of a circle—an initial dot—and the departure of that same circle as a final dot at the other end of its “life cycle”, seen in three dimensions that same “being” exists outside of what two-dimensional bubble people experience as time. Time for these two dimensional bubble critters is, in fact, not what it appears to be, and neither are their forms. In fact time as they know it only exists in this two dimensional plane, allowing the two-dimensional circles to experience three-dimensional phenomena in their two-dimensional world.

So time, we can see by analogy, is the experiencing of the next dimension; it's not actually a “thing”, and isn't even a characteristic of that next invisible dimension—it's only a characteristic of its experiencing in the dimension below. If you let the implications sink in, they can shift your understanding of three-dimensional reality in a big way. Consider the possibility that just maybe our birth, growth and death are only an experiencing of something that's not coming or going anywhere when observed from the real fifth dimension. Maybe it simply *is*.

“Now what?” you may be wondering. How can I do anything to alter my relationship to time if it doesn't even really exist? You can indeed, because the fact is that although in the fifth dimension and beyond things most certainly don't exist in the way we think they do, we experience our bodies and senses only in three dimensions, so it is only from within the confines of this location that we can shift our life experience. You experience what you experience in three-dimensional reality, so this is the place you must engage.

Referring back to Marie's image of the time cord pulling us through our three dimensional plane of existence, if we look at what the bubble world analogy teaches us, we can see a little more clearly how to "be" with linear time. Imagine for a moment that some of the bubble creatures felt rushed as they moved through the plane, while others felt that time moved unbelievably slowly—even too slowly. Some resisted becoming bigger and rounder, while others longed to become bigger and rounder faster. And all of them, we imagine, might have been constantly comparing their own movement through the plane of existence to the movements of those around them. When their particular passage through the plane of existence was happening at a different pace, they may have judged themselves as not as good as their neighbors.

But when we understand the three-dimensional dynamic, we can see that the whole question of faster and slower, as good as, better, or worse than, is completely nonsensical. Movement through the plane happens at whatever pace it occurs, no matter how much wishing, resisting, or urging is involved. So these bubble creatures could actually let go of all their effortful, stressful thoughts and everything would still be exactly the same. The only change would come in the life experience of that individual bubble, which would be vastly improved; no more suffering would emerge from all the thoughts about how things should be other than what they are.

To see ourselves with such clarity, we need to become aware of what we're resisting or rejecting, as well as what we're identifying with. I'm identified with being busy all the time. Marie is identified with not being criticized or judged. Sandy is identified with being in control. And Sam is identified with juggling on the brink. I'm resisting being un-rushed, because my happiness and excitement *seems* to derive from busy-ness. Marie is resisting doing anything other than what she is focused on because she believes she might otherwise lose control of "her" time and be subject to criticism. Sandy is resisting letting things speed up and slow down as they will because she believes things should be orderly. And Sam is resisting doing one thing at a time because he believes he'll see what a precarious position he's in if he does so.

But the fact is, all these human bubbles will continue to move through the plane of existence just fine, with or without all the identification and resistance. They could have thoughts, but not those that are being directed to making things happen that are totally impossible. They could have feelings, but not those that are based on a sense of lack. And they could have experiences, but not compare them constantly with those of their neighbors.

Remember, “*You are not your thoughts, feelings, and experiences.*” You never have been, and you never will be. You are simply the experiencer of those things. As long as you don’t identify with them and attach to them, everything is fine. But when you decide that they belong to you, and you start to try to make them into something more than simply fleeting occurrences as the surface of your bubble passes through this plane of existence, that’s when you get into problems. Good, bad, or indifferent, thoughts, feelings and experiences are simply phenomena that come and go, just like dots and circles, just like bubbles, and just like the bodies and minds we believe ourselves to be.

There’s a window into the mysterious nature of time and existence here, but we can only imagine by analogy what time really is. We can’t experience it directly, no matter how hard we try.

It’s time now for you to take a good, hard look at yourself, and at your own relationship to time. Keep in mind that for transformation to occur you must start from the place that you are right now in your life. It requires no other preparation. The important step is simply to begin.

This is where you can begin to put the Exercise from Chapter 3 of *The Not So Big Life*--[Understanding Your Relationship to Time](#)--to full use.

When combined with the time maps from the Time Challenge, which you can find on the [Chapter Resources page](#) on the website, you now have the raw material with which to evaluate your life’s relative balance. You may want to make two or three copies of each of your completed time maps so that you can highlight different aspects of your life in order to better visualize changes you’d like to make in your use of time. As you proceed, your primary objective is to be on the lookout for patterns of time use that necessitate multi-tasking and rushing, or that bring on procrastination and resistance.

You’ll be able to use the results of this exercise to help inform your approach to the contents of the next deleted chapter that I’ll be posting on January 1, 2008, which takes a look at some of our culture’s favorite diversionary tactics that keep us separated from the experience of real meaningfulness.