

"A perceptive and practical book about why our calendars so rarely reflect our priorities and what we can do to regain control."

—Adam Grant, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Think Again*

AT YOUR BEST



How to Get Time, Energy &
Priorities Working in Your Favor

Carey Nieuwhof

Bestselling author of **DIDN'T SEE IT COMING**

"Carey's book will help you reorganize your life. And then you can share a copy with someone you care about." —Seth Godin, author of *The Practice*

AT YOUR BEST

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*How to Get
Time, Energy, and Priorities
Working in Your Favor*

CAREY NIEUWHOF



WATERBROOK

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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*To my grandparents Gerrit and Grita Nap,
who had all the time in the world for me*

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INTRODUCTION

I have no idea how you're doing as you pick up this book and start reading, but I'm going to guess you're stressed. That's a pretty accurate diagnosis these days because, well, who isn't stressed?

You and I live with time pressures our great-grandparents couldn't have imagined. Yes, they had pressures too. Crop yields, droughts, and early frosts that threatened the harvest. Or the tyranny and backbreaking conditions of factory life. But my stress—and perhaps yours—is a little different.

For those of us who might call ourselves knowledge workers—entrepreneurs, teachers, engineers, software developers, physicians, nurses, managers, graphic designers, administrators, accountants, pastors, social workers, analysts, attorneys, leaders, or highly motivated stay-at-home parents with dreams—our challenges feel real but are usually hard to diagnose. It's hard to figure out what's making us so stressed.

Here's the truth: you deserve to stop living at an unsustain-

able pace. What if—instead—you learned how to live at your best, personally and professionally?

That's what this book is about.

I hope it provides both a reasonable diagnosis for you and some welcome relief. I also hope it makes you stop feeling guilty. I'm guessing that, unlike your ancestors' difficulties, most of your problems stem from having too much, not too little. Too many demands. Too many opportunities. Too much information. Too many distractions. Too many choices. Too many people vying for attention. And way too much stuff on the calendar.

I get it. It got to be so much for me that, back in 2006, the overwhelm, overcommitment, and overwork almost took me out. As I touch on in this book, I burned out that year. At first I thought that's what this book was going to be about—my journey into burnout and how to fight back. But books take on a life of their own, and instead, what I've written is far more about the cure than the problem.

My friend Jon, a *New York Times* bestselling author and highly sought-after speaker, once asked me this question: "So, do you have to burn out? Is it just a rite of passage that every leader has to go through? Can't you write a life story where there's no burn-out chapter?" Jon was in his late thirties when he asked me that question, just a few years younger than I was when I burned out back in '06. Jon's also a devoted husband and father of two teenage girls.

He asked a relevant question. According to a study of 7,500 full-time American employees, more than 70 percent of adults in their twenties and thirties are experiencing at least some level of burnout.¹ That means a stunning number of young adults are feeling worn out from work and life before they hit their fortieth birthday.

Recently I delivered a keynote talk to leaders in Dallas. The conference host thought it would be a good idea to do an instant poll of the eight hundred leaders in the room to see how many people identified with burnout symptoms. The question was simple: “In your view, over the last year, how many times have you experienced burnout symptoms?”

- never
- once or twice
- regularly (three to six times)
- constantly

While the poll was not scientific, the results stopped me in my tracks. Of the eight hundred leaders gathered, *93 percent* identified as having wrestled through some degree of burnout in the last year. Only 7 percent answered “Never.”

When I saw the live results appear on the screen, I had to stop talking. I choked up.

Maybe you’re one of the 93 percent.

Or maybe you’re one of the 7 percent like Jon who would say, “Not me . . . and I really don’t want to end up there.”

Which brings us back to Jon’s question: *Is burnout inevitable?* I didn’t have a good answer when he asked that a few years ago. I have a better one now.

No, Jon, you don’t have to burn out. It’s not inevitable. And if you’re one of the 93 percent, you don’t need to stay there. I didn’t, and you don’t have to either.

That said, stress and its popular cousin, burnout, are spreading like an epidemic. And, like other diseases, sometimes you have it without even realizing what’s going on. Maybe you picked up this book (or had it given to you) but thought, *I’m stressed out, but*

no way I'm burned out. You're perpetually tired, a bit numb, and continually overwhelmed, but you just call it normal because, well, all that feels so normal these days.

So, this isn't a burnout book. It is, instead, a stay-out-of-burnout book.

Things are so different for me now than they were when I burned out. The world is actually a little busier, crazier, and more complicated than it was back in 2006. But inside me, there's a deeper peace, a greater sense of joy, and a way of dealing with the constantly escalating demands of life and leadership that have resulted in my being able to get far more accomplished in far less time. This book is designed to help you find that peace, joy, and much higher productivity too.

One final note before we get started. You'll soon discover (if you haven't already) that I'm a person of faith, and in addition to working briefly in law and now running a leadership company full time, I served as the pastor of a local church for two decades. If that's not anything like your background, don't let it throw you off.

While my life and approach to leadership are fueled by my faith, I've intentionally written this book so that the principles work regardless of your faith perspective. Because so many people need hope. And so many people need help.

I hope this framework provides some practical, powerful strategies for you that will help you for decades to come.

It's time to take your life and leadership back. You ready?

PART 1

THIS MUCH STRESS IS NOT OKAY

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BUILD A LIFE YOU DON'T WANT TO ESCAPE FROM

*Why Most of Us Secretly Resent the Life and Career
We've So Carefully Built*

What we call our despair is often only the painful
eagerness of unfed hope.

—George Eliot

A decade and a half ago, life seemed to be way more than what I had signed up for and could handle. The organization I was leading had grown bigger than I ever expected it to, and the pressures of leading a staff, handling growth, being married for over a decade, and raising two young sons were more than I had bargained for.

After I pulled into the driveway at home one evening, I sat in the car, the sun having disappeared just long enough that it was neither day nor night. It was gray. I was listening to the radio but not really listening. In my mind, I was grappling with whether I had the energy to walk through the door.

I'm guessing dinner won't be ready. Everything's probably running behind again.

The moment I walk in and decide to lie down on the couch to recharge, not only will I get the eye roll from Toni ("Carey, how can you be this tired again, and can't you see I need your help?"), but I'll also have two kids who bounce over to me, wanting to play.

Homework isn't done—that's for sure. The last thing I feel like doing is helping with homework. Especially math.

Then I wondered, Has anyone seen me yet? I haven't seen anyone pass by the front window.

Maybe I should put the car in reverse and head back to work.

Ugh.

As soon as my mind went there, I realized that was no solution. There were just as many issues to deal with at the office—probably more. So, nope, not work.

Maybe swing by Andrew's place?

Wait. I haven't texted him in . . . oh man, a month, six weeks. That won't work.

How is any of this going to get any better? How can I get out of this?

I need to escape.

I can't tell you how many times in that season I wanted to get away. Maybe not escape for real, as in quit my job, take a massive pay cut, destroy my career, and make my wife think (again) that she had made a horrible mistake, but break free in some way. Like a five-year-old who decides he's had enough of his family, packs a spare T-shirt and bandanna in a backpack, and storms off down the street.

The weird thing was that, in my case, everything was going exceptionally well, at least from the outside looking in. I had married my college sweetheart, and we had two healthy sons. Careerwise, I had moved from radio to law to, of all things, pas-

toring a local church (yes, I know, a career path most high school guidance counselors highly recommend). What I thought would be an eighteen-month assignment in small rural churches ended up turning into decades with the same people in a Toronto-area multisite congregation. By the end of my first decade there, we had become the fastest-growing church in our denomination and one of the larger ones in the country.

So . . . success, right? Well, on many fronts, yes. Except inside me the pressure kept intensifying. I didn't really know how to lead a growing team. I pretended I did, but my strategy of making it up as I went along was wearing thin (mostly on other people).

I was also overrun by the number of people who were by then attending our church. Memorizing names (which at one point I had been really good at) had become an exercise in futility as my brain constantly tripped into overload.

"So good to see you here. You must be new? What's your name again?"

"It's Dave. Same name as last week and when we met the week before."

"Right . . . Dave."

Yes, that actually happened, and who wants a pastor who doesn't remember your name?

My formula for handling growth was as simple as it was stupid: more people equals more hours. As a result, I was cheating sleep, which made me feel simultaneously comatose and irritable most days. I had no insight into how to lead anything bigger, if the growth continued, other than to work harder, which I was beginning to sense would send me over some kind of cliff to an early demise. I'd had quite a bit of optimism earlier in my leadership, but recently I'd started to wonder, *Am I enough?*

My inability to keep up at work also meant I was starting to

fail at home. My family rarely got the best of me. Something as small as stepping on a Lego piece in bare feet could lead to a meltdown that lasted all day.

These are just a few snapshots of my life at the time. It all felt so unsustainable. If things got any more complicated or any busier, I was going to go the way of a cheese puff in a windstorm.

Worse, I wasn't even forty yet. *Please don't tell me there are decades more of this ahead!*

Which leads us back to the escape thing. It wasn't a hammock in Fiji that I kept thinking about or an alternate life in some new city with better coffee shops. No, I wanted to escape to a warehouse.

Unlike my current day job, the warehouse offered *so many* attractive features. Managing cardboard boxes would be much simpler than managing the challenges of leadership. Unloading a pallet had so much more appeal than having yet another person unload on me in my office. And the best thing about working in a warehouse is that when you stack boxes, they stay stacked. This being in stark contrast to people, who never seem to do what you want them to do.

It's not like any part of my life was something I didn't want or hadn't helped craft. Yes, life is unpredictable, and no, I couldn't have forecast the details, but I had signed up for all of it, except, of course, for the stress. It's like the life I had so carefully built turned on me, betrayed me. It was nothing like it was supposed to be.

OUT OF TIME, LITTLE ENERGY, NOT GETTING NEARLY ENOUGH DONE

When I was living a life I wanted to escape from, I felt like I never had enough time to get done what really mattered, let alone

everything else that was stacked up for me to tackle. My energy level was perpetually low, as though I were toggling between autopilot and the zombie universe. Sometimes it seemed like I was one bad day away from deflating completely. And as far as my priorities went, it was as though I had almost no control over my life, because what I wanted to do got hijacked by other people and commitments on a daily—no, hourly—basis.

I didn't want to screw my life up, but I had a sinking feeling that's precisely what I was doing. I was overwhelmed, overcommitted, and overworked doing exactly what I thought I wanted to do with my life. Equally disheartening was the reality that my dreams were getting squeezed out in the process. I had always wanted to write a book. Prior to age forty, I had typed exactly zero words in pursuit of that dream. My family wasn't hitting our financial goals. To make it worse, I had no hobbies, I never found time to exercise, and I quietly resented people who made the time to enjoy life. I was barely surviving.

*Many people are
overwhelmed,
overcommitted, and
overworked doing exactly
what they thought they
wanted to do with their
lives.*

Eventually it all caught up with me. In 2006, not only did my unsustainable pace crush me—it also nearly killed me. I slid headlong into burnout. I spent months with my passion gone, my energy sapped, and my hope barely flickering. It wasn't the end, but it definitely felt like it. I was numb. It's like my body went on strike and said, "Enough with the craziness."

If you don't declare a finish line to your work, your body will.

On that note, any idea what chronic stress might be doing to *your* body? Sure, maybe you haven't burned out. But if you don't think that stress costs you anything, you might want to think again.

THE PRICE OF STRESS

Stress—which is medically defined as “any intrinsic or extrinsic stimulus that evokes a biological response”¹—can apparently do some real damage. The American Psychological Association noted that the impact of stress can include headaches, chronic pain, shortness of breath, and full-on panic attacks. Stress has also been linked to heartburn, acid reflux, bloating, nausea, indigestion, the loss of sexual desire, lower sperm count, lower sperm motility, and the inability to conceive. In addition, stress can adversely affect memory function, slow your reaction time, and create behavioral and mood disorders.

Lovely.

Stress can also impair communication between your immune system and your HPA axis—a complex, multiorgan feedback system that regulates stress hormones, including cortisol. No, I hadn't heard of that either until I looked it up, but apparently, stress raises your cortisol levels, which in turn can spawn a host of physical and mental health issues, like chronic fatigue, diabe-

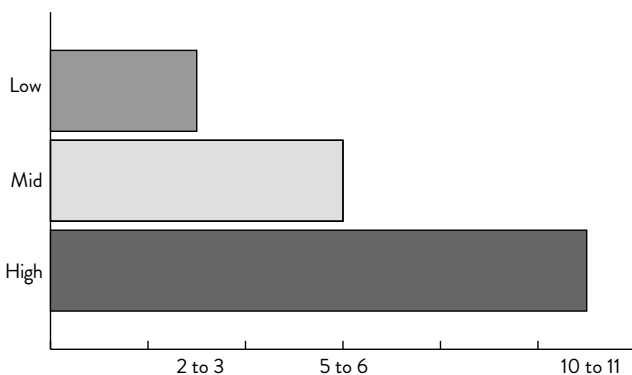
tes, obesity, depression, and autoimmune disorders. Research also links stress to cardiovascular problems as life threatening as heart attacks and strokes.²

This, surprisingly, is only a *partial* list of the damage stress can do, but need we say more? I didn't think so.

Technology only makes this all more complicated. You used to have to go to the office to work. Now, thanks to your phone, the office goes to you—a beautiful gift to all of us who are workaholics. Our inability to control our use of technology is making us sicker, more anxious, and more distraught than ever before.

So, all that said, do you have any idea what your personal stress level is? To help you find out, I designed a short burnout quiz that can give you a rough idea of how high your current stress level is. You can take it for free at www.AtYourBestToday.com. The results, while nonscientific, can give you an idea of what your personal burnout level is.

BURNOUT INDICATOR



SURVIVAL IS NOT YOUR GOAL

You didn't sign up for a disease-riddled existence spawned by your lifestyle. Neither did I. Yet practically all of us are overwhelmed, overcommitted, and overworked. Parents feel perpetually behind. Retired people are stressed. So are entry-level employees and high school students, who are increasingly being rattled by anxiety and panic attacks. Meanwhile, entrepreneurs, midlevel managers, nurses, lawyers, tradespeople, first responders, accountants, church leaders, and even the medical doctors who diagnose our stress find themselves deluged just trying to keep up with everything.

Which is really quite remarkable. After all, how did the most prosperous people who ever lived (which is everyone in the developed world in the twenty-first century) make their lives about *survival*? Seriously. I mean, you and I hardly have to make our own loincloths or hunt deer in the forest to feed our families. There is little about your life or mine that requires us to merely *survive*, but in the midst of being the most affluent and free people who ever lived, we've enslaved ourselves to survival.

How on earth did we get to the place where we say things like the following?

"I just need to make it to summer vacation."

"Let me survive final exams."

"Really, my goal is to get through to July, and then all will be good . . . I hope."

Many of us have found ourselves in a place we didn't want to be: resenting the life and career we've so carefully built. Or if we're not there yet, we're getting close.

So, let me ask *you*: Are you eager to escape? Is your life filled with activity on the outside and emotional emptiness on the inside?

The first thing to do is face up to the reality.

IT'S NOT JUST A SEASON

To revive some semblance of hope amid all the overwhelm, maybe you tell yourself that the stress you're feeling and the crazy busy life you're living is fine because it's *just a season*.

I spent the first decade of my time in leadership convincing myself that I was just in a busy period. It seemed like a plausible explanation. After all, I was carrying so much. So I would tell my friends and family, "Yeah, it's crazy now, but it's just a busy season."

When I'd see them a month later, we'd repeat the whole conversation.

Eventually my friends and family started mocking me, as only friends and family do. "You're always in a busy season. That's what you say every single time. Ha!"

They were right.

Their honesty made me finally get honest with myself. My repeated explanations of the *new* thing that was making life crazy—and how everything would be better once the project/trip/holiday/year was over—made me sound like a guy who hadn't taken the time to listen to his futile little script in a while.

Don't use the same excuse I did. Seasons, after all, have beginnings and endings. If your busy season has no ending, *it's not a season—it's your life*.

I'm not trying to bring you down. I'm trying to help you out. Maybe it's time to tell yourself the truth about what's been happening in your life.

To help you see it in a fresh light, let me put a twist on this. What might you say to the generation coming after you if you were *absolutely truthful* about what you've discovered life is *really* like? Would you say something like, well, this?

THE MOST HONEST COMMENCEMENT SPEECH EVER

Imagine yourself stepping up to a podium to deliver your first commencement address and telling a college graduating class something like this:

“I am honored to be with you today at your commencement from one of the finest universities in the world. Most people, in a moment like this, try to inspire you. I’m here to inform you because, kids, the truth is your friend.

“You’re likely wondering what’s ahead. Let me give you a snapshot.

“To begin with, most of you are in debt beyond any comfortable level. Good luck paying that back, but here’s a sneak peak of the future you’ve financed. If you aren’t already in love, maybe you’ll find someone soon and settle down. You’ll get a job—hopefully a career job, if you’re that lucky. At some point, if you’re so inclined, you may even have kids. But underneath, there will be undiagnosed pain—an unspoken sense that there’s a meaningful calling for you but your life is spinning out of control and you can’t even pause long enough to discover why. As you sit in an office day after day, slowly suffocating, you’ll live with this angst of never coming close to what you suspect you might have been. You won’t fully understand the anxiety, of course, but it will eventually dawn on you that this life you’d anticipated for so long is one that, most days, you long to escape.

“For some of you, the escape will happen every day at four o’clock or five or nine—whenever you can finally head home or close the laptop for good. You’ll end up binge-watching your favorite show over takeout because you’re too tired to cook or scrolling social media until your eyes sting and you fall asleep, phone still in hand. Some of you will find your escape in a third glass of bourbon or wine most nights, or you’ll unwind with a

joint or another trip to the fridge because reality feels a little too heavy to carry. For still others among you, it will be the prescription medication you're no longer taking as directed, or you'll find yourself drifting away from the people closest to you and flirting online with people you used to know in high school, because your current relationship is oh-so-dull (despite what your Instagram feed suggests). Or maybe you'll live for the weekend. Or your next vacation. Or the lake. Or the game. Or the pool. Or your next massage. Anything but what you're doing right now.

"Some of you will bury your pain with, ironically, more work. Workaholism is, after all, the most rewarded addiction in the nation. You can be fired for drinking too much, but working too much usually gets you promoted. It also gets you a raise. So you dump yourself into bed exhausted most nights, only to do it all again tomorrow.

"Finally, a small number of you won't lapse into any of those patterns. Instead, you'll soldier on and endure four decades of banality to achieve the dream of having a decent life when you retire, assuming you live that long.

"All this and more awaits you, my friends. Welcome to life as we know it."

Well, how's that for distressing?

As dismal as it is to read it in black and white, that's the script an inordinate number of highly "successful" people adopt. Most of us have embraced some version of it. I did. You probably have.

So, here we are as a culture.

Busy is the default.

Slammed is normal.

Crazy time is all the time.

Life has been reduced to going through the motions.

Bottom line? This much stress is reality—and it is not okay.

Here's the good news. You don't have to live a life that stresses

you out every day. Just because this is your life now doesn't mean this has to be your life forever. It wasn't for me, and it won't be for you either.

BURN THE SCRIPT

The script that passes for normal life for millions of people has got to go. I'd love for you to decide today that you're going to tear it up. On second thought, go further. Burn it. Get a can of gas, throw a match on it, and watch the last ember drift off into space. That's what I did.

On the other side of my burnout, I was determined to live in a fundamentally different way. I had no idea how to do that, so I spent the next few years reading widely and hiring coaches and counselors to help me figure out how to live in a whole new way. I was tired of feeling like I was always out of time, sick of dragging my feet through day after endless day, and more than done with putting in an eight- or ten-hour day and feeling like I had accomplished everything for everyone else and nothing on my own to-do list, despite giving it my best shot. If that's what normal was, I was done.

I had a choice to make. Instead of heading to a warehouse or hammock or abandoning everything I'd built over my life to date, I decided to change the one thing I could change: *me*.

I rebuilt my life. My family didn't change; I stayed married to the same woman and committed to our two sons. I kept the same job (not saying you have to, because it's not a prerequisite for transformational change). We didn't even leave town. I just changed what I was doing with my days and how I was doing it.

As I studied top performers, I realized they moved way past

time management and were highly focused on managing not just their time but their energy. Usually they had one thing in common: *they did what they were best at when they were at their best*. In other words, they worked in their area of principal gifting and passion when their energy was at its highest during the day. And as a result, they got their top priorities accomplished day in and day out. I started to implement that rhythm in my own life as a keystone habit.

So, while not much on the outside changed, *I* started to change—for the better. I got my life back and my leadership back. Learning how to better use my resources also proved surprisingly effective in restoring my heart, defeating my cynicism, and giving me back a joy in living that I'd thought was gone forever.

Let me get specific. After I started doing what I was best at when I was at my best, I

- saw our congregation grow to three times the size it was before I burned out
- worked through the funk in my marriage to find a place where my wife and I felt genuinely in love again
- published five books in eleven years
- launched a leadership podcast and started a blog that now reaches millions of leaders a year
- traveled about a hundred days a year, speaking around the world and investing in leaders
- started a company that produces resources that help people thrive in life and leadership
- discovered three hobbies I love
- began exercising
- lost twenty pounds

- started getting a full night's sleep pretty much every night
- enjoyed more time off than I ever had in my adult life
- spent more time with my family than ever while being more effective at work

At the time, I had no idea how well the changes I made would set me up for the digital revolution of smartphones, social media, and 24-7 access that was right around the corner, as well as the rapid growth of my own leadership that would soon follow, but the transformation was pivotal to helping me thrive during the coming deluge.

All this might sound a little over the top, but the best part is that similar things have been happening in the lives of thousands of other people whom I've had the privilege of teaching as they've adopted the principles we'll cover. Doing what you're best at when you're at your best unlocks potential and freedom on a scale that shocks a lot of people who try it. It has the potential to change everything.

GET EVERYTHING THAT'S WORKING AGAINST YOU WORKING FOR YOU

As I've already hinted, if you look at how you navigate your life, regardless of where you are, what you do, or whom you do it with, you deal with three primary assets: time, energy, and priorities. Whether you're writing your last college exam, launching your company, landing an account, spending the day off site with your team, waking up on your day off, getting the kids' lunches packed, or even taking a vacation at the beach, every day you fight for how your time, energy, and priorities are spent.

Practically speaking, you face a thousand little questions every day:

- *Will the website be live in time for the launch?*
- *How much more effort should I put into trying to persuade this person to come on board?*
- *Will I ever be able to get my email inbox to zero, or should I just stop trying?*
- *How much caffeine will I need to tackle the final session of the day and then entertain everyone who came in from out of town?*
- *Should I interview the new hire tomorrow morning or wait until the afternoon so I can get my work done first?*
- *Do I really have time for a round of golf before my daughter's dance lesson?*
- *Am I going to do a little more research for that final term paper or go out with my friends?*
- *Will I head to the beach today or slip into town to explore a nearby village?*

For years, it felt like time, energy, and priorities were working *against* me. When you don't have an intentional strategy for how to manage those three assets, that's exactly what happens. But I've been living a whole different way for a decade and a half now, and I want to help you learn to make the most of your own time, energy, and priorities.

What if you could control your calendar and learn how to say no without the threat of losing friends or influence?

What if you could become much better at what you do while working fewer hours?

What if you could protect your time, prioritize your family, and still crush it at work?

Applying what they've learned from the *At Your Best* principles, the people below have achieved beautiful results (all true stories):

- Jeff and Al charted the energy levels of their eighty-member staff and reorganized their meeting schedules to raise productivity and deepen employee engagement.
- Christina discovered “insane levels of productivity” to develop a phone app, work out, and spend more time with her newborn.
- John lost seventy pounds by making time for eating healthier, exercising, and getting a full night’s sleep. He also built a deck on his house, started hiking, and took up a hobby.
- Steven started a blog—something he’d wanted to do for a long time.
- Cassi became significantly less stressed and more present with her kids while at the same time starting a blog, getting more active on social media, and writing her first book proposal that she’s pitching to publishers.
- Andrew started taking a full day off every week for the first time.
- Dave, a pastor and the father of two kids under the age of four, used the extra hours he freed up to be home far more often with his family and to master how to speak without using notes.
- Zach began his doctorate.
- Joel, the executive director of a nonprofit that helps students, moved from being in twelve schools to being in twenty-nine within four months, nearly doubling the number of students helped from 800 to 1,500.

Constant stress denies so many people permission to dream or to accomplish what they’re called to do. What most people have discovered when they apply the principles we’ll cover is that

there is a much better way to live than barely making it through the day, only to get up and repeat the drudgery tomorrow.

WHAT'S YOUR DREAM?

I love asking people what their dreams are.

Sometimes the dreams feel big. Entrepreneurs cast vision about the new idea that they're struggling to get off the ground amid a million obstacles. CEOs tell me how much they long to find an alternative to the incessant pressure. I've talked to so many people who want to write a book or launch a podcast but just can't find the bandwidth to pull it off.

Sometimes the dreams are so simple they make me smile, because all of us have beautiful things and people who somewhere along the line got squeezed out of our lives. One woman told me that what she really wanted was a weed-free garden—her plants used to be so life giving to her. Another told me she used to paint watercolors and would love to get back the spark that painting created in her life. Fathers tell me they miss seeing their kids' games and they're done with showing up late for school plays. Mothers tell me they're tired of being disengaged from the kids they love and sick of feeling like they can't give their kids what they really need. Others tell me they just want an actual day off with zero interruptions for once.

You probably have a dream—or maybe even a calling—that went into hiding long ago or seems so impossible that you're afraid to say it out loud or even admit it to yourself. In this journey ahead, you're going to get space to dream again and learn the strategy that will free up the time to pursue that dream.

I don't know what your goals and dreams are or what your calling in life is, but I do know it's possible not only to become

de-stressed and to avoid burnout and to come back from it but also to *thrive*. To live fully alive. I would love for you to pull yourself out of the soul-sucking bog that passes for existence—the job you can never get ahead on, the dreams you let die, the soul you’ve neglected, the endless social media scroll that makes you envious, angry, and vacuous all at once, the numbness you’ve allowed yourself to believe is normal—and embrace an approach that will be so much more life giving. To truly be at your best. Not somebody else’s best, but yours.

That’s what this book is about.

If you stick with it through the next few hours together, you’ll see results you may never have thought were possible. And when you’re done, you’ll have built a life that you no longer want to escape from. Instead, you might actually love it.

CHAPTER 1 IN A SNAP

- The typical formula for growth is as simple as it is stupid: more people equals more hours.
- Many people are overwhelmed, overcommitted, and overworked doing exactly what they thought they wanted to do with their lives.
- If you don’t declare a finish line to your work, your body will.
- You used to have to go to the office to work more. Now, thanks to your phone, the office goes to you.
- The most prosperous people who ever lived (which is everyone in the developed world in the twenty-first century) have made their lives about survival.
- Too many people build lives they want to escape from.
- If your busy season has no ending, it’s not a season—it’s your life.

- Workaholism is the most rewarded addiction in our society.
 - Top performers do what they're best at when they're at their best—they work in their area of principal gifting and passion when their energy is at its highest.
 - Everybody gets three primary assets every day: time, energy, and priorities.
 - When you don't have an intentional strategy, then time, energy, and priorities work against you, not for you.
 - You can protect your time, prioritize your family, and still crush it at work.
 - Constant stress denies many people permission to dream or to accomplish what they're called to do.
-

"A perceptive and practical book about why our calendars so rarely reflect our priorities and what we can do to regain control."
—Adam Grant, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *Think Again*

AT YOUR BEST



How to Get Time, Energy &
Priorities Working in Your Favor

Carey Nieuwhof

Bestselling author of **DIDN'T SEE IT COMING**

"Carey's book will help you reorganize your life. And then you can share a copy with someone you care about." —Seth Godin, author of *The Practice*

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