

Becoming a Master of the Time-Scarcity Demon

It's something most of us deal with every day, often without realizing it's there: a feeling of time scarcity.

We know it well: the feeling of having too much to do and not enough time to do it all.

This is true not only of work — where we have too many projects, meetings, emails, admin tasks, calls, requests, messages — but also of our personal lives. We want to exercise, eat well, meditate, learn something cool, travel, go out with friends, spend time in solitude, go for hikes, read a million books, take care of finances and errands, keep up with podcasts and news and interesting online content and our loved ones on social networks and fascinating people on social media, while finding space for contemplation and quiet.

Whew.

How can we manage to do all of that in what is obviously limited time? How can we stuff all our hopes, dreams, tasks and errands into such a limited box?

One answer is to do fewer things — simplify by cutting things out of your life, do some things less or not at all. Another answer is to outsource, hire a team, delegate. These are all great options.

But true mastery of the time scarcity demon only really comes from a mindset shift.

We have to address the feeling rather than figure out the logistics of it all. Addressing the logistics (the hows and whats) don't really change the feeling. The feeling will always be there, until we deal with it.

Whats Going On

The problem isn't that we have too little time — we all get the same amount of time each day and each week. It's the exact right amount of time, because it's all there is.

It's possible that we have too many things to do. But actually the real problem is that we *want* to do too much in the time we have. The amount of things we have to do is not usually the difficulty, but rather that given how much time we have (let's say a day), we want to cram too much into it.

We want more and more, and are not satisfied with what we're actually able to do in the time we have.

We want more, and what we have is never enough. It's this lack of being satisfied that is

the real problem. We reject our experience, and want more.

In Buddhism, this is called “greed.” I don’t love this term because it feels judgmental, but it’s simply that we’re not satisfied with what we have, we want more.

The answer to greed, according to Buddhism, is generosity. Which is to say, to see the amazingness in what we already have. To see the profound beauty in the experience we’re having right now. To love what is.

Mastering the Demon

To master this demon of time scarcity, this feeling that we never have enough time and we have too much to do ... takes a development of awareness and a development of this quality of generosity.

We need to be aware of when we’re feeling overwhelmed. What does this feel like, right now, for you in your body? What does it feel like to never feel like there’s enough time to do all you want to do? Learn to identify this feeling, and start to recognize it when it’s happening.

When the feeling comes, start retraining your mind from wanting more ... to seeing the greatness of what is right in front of you. Retrain by using a new thinking pattern.

All we can do is one thing at a time. All we have is this moment, this day.

And it is enough. It is beautiful, incredible, if we just really see it and appreciate it.

We can do one thing, and be incredibly grateful that we are able to do that one thing.

Each moment, we can do another one thing, giving it our full attention, giving it full weight, acting as if it might be our last act, and truly appreciating the opportunity we have to be alive in this moment.