

Why?

Make Your Time Count

You can't make footprints in the sands of time by sitting on your butt! And who wants to leave buttpoints in the sands of time?" - Bob Woawad-

Keeping it 100

“My current predicament is a direct result of my once warped decision-making. Little did I know, a seemingly rational decision could have used a little more thought. Now that I have an opportunity to reassess my decisions, I've realized that several of my most hasty choices were the cause of the derailment of my life. I've learned that time isn't always a friend to life. You ask how so; well just look back on the past 3 years and what do you see?

TIME

*Time not considering your preparation for the future,
Time not pausing to allow you to get your thoughts in order,
Time that is unaware of your social life or needs,
Time that surpasses your every urge to catch up on this life of continuity,
Time that can care less about your lack of motivation,
Time that is streaming while you remain stagnant...
Time is an element of existence that should be treated with the utmost respect,
and used in a responsible manner...
Don't let time lap your life, but
let your life lap time.*

Fortunately for me by using my time in jail for self-evaluation and a significant amount of reflection on information that was freely offered to me as a youth, I've been able to improve my decision making drastically. By implementing numerous values and advice that I took for granted while young, life has become not only productive, but it has exceeded all of my expectation of its fulfillment. As I face 5 to 7 years I want to remember it is not too late.”

J. Owens

Have you ever visited a cemetery? What information appeared on the tombstones? If you look closely at most headstones, you will see they usually included the name of a person, an epitaph, and the dates of birth and death. Sandwiched in between the date of the person's birth and death is a small symbol, the infamous ~ (dash), that along with the words of the epitaph is intended to sum up one's life. Tombstone epitaphs are a reflection of one's existence highlighting the deceased's personality traits or accomplishments in life. One of the most familiar appears on the headstone of Mel Blanc, known as the man of a thousand voices, who voiced Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, Daffy Duck, Yosemite Sam and more... it reads, "That's all folks." Voicing the character of Porky Pig, his stuttered, "Th-th-th-that's all folks!" is the best-remembered version of the line. Epitaphs capture in a few words the message of who this person was, what they were all about, and summarize the legacy they are leaving behind. The dash however represents the whole of the person's life accomplishments. The dash is about how they lived each day, moment-by-moment, decision-by-decision.

Legacy
Something left behind by
someone who has died.

As you think about the dash of your life, you might think about the famous quote, "You can count your time or make your time count." I hear it nearly every day in the jail. The funny thing is, if more people really thought about this quote, their lives might be a whole lot different. This quote represents one of life's big questions. I believe that the question behind the dash is: are you living your life so it counts or is the dash just a placeholder that represents the number of days you have been alive?

When you are stuck in traffic, riding the L, sitting on a bus, hanging at the mall, sitting watching your 3 hours and 20 minutes of TV, sending or receiving your 96th text message, playing your 25 minutes of video games spending 52 minutes at your computer (e.g. on facebook, watching YouTube, or i.m.'ing), are you counting your time or making your time count? (Nielsen). I didn't just make up the numbers; these are the numbers for how the average American teen spends their time each day. Do you want to be average or do you want to figure out a way to unlock the door to an independent future that doesn't include being locked up? These activities by themselves aren't bad in fact, but these same activities can be time put towards creating your legacy and moving you towards independence. It is all about how you are spending your time doing these activities that can be the difference. It's up to you what your dash will stand for. The dash of life begins now in this moment and like a

Timex watch it keeps on ticking, each and every moment for the rest of your life.

Before you stop reading because you think this book is one more adult trying to tell you what to do, you should know that it isn't, since I figure there are enough adults around you right now who are trying to do that. I think that's a part of the problem, and you need to figure it out for yourself. This book is about touching the seeds of wisdom and freedom that lie within you. You will be doing most of the work, and a lot of it will involve clearing the dust off the mirror of your mind and taking a good look at yourself. The fact is, no one can live your life for you. It is your life, and you are the only one who will spend every minute of it with yourself. So what do you want to say about the one person who will travel along with you on this journey through life? What kind of a friend are you being to yourself?



Wisdom
Knowledge applied...

This book is full of all kinds of questions. Few of which can be answered with a simple yes or no. They require thinking, and one thing I've learned is a whole lot of teens today don't want to think because it's a lot easier to blame someone else than to think for yourself. Becoming independent means you need to start thinking for yourself. Start by asking yourself: What do you want the *dash* of your life to be about? How do you want to be remembered? Who do you want to be? I'm not asking what do you want to do to pay the bills or what career path you want to take; I really mean who do you want to be? Your answer might sound something like this... Respectful, Independent, Wise, Spiritual, etc. These and the other questions in this book are some of the big questions in life, ones that everyone answers. If you take the time to find your answers to these questions you are on the road to making your time count. The great news is that answering them and living out your answers can extend your time, meaning you will live longer. Unfortunately, many people answer them by the choices they make in the moment, based on their emotions or by following others, rather than thinking about it ahead of time. If you don't take the time to think about it, you may well end up feeling knocked down by life, empty inside, and maybe even locked up behind physical bars.

Who do you want to be? – That may be the only question each person needs to answer that really matters because the answer to that one big question lays the foundation for the rest of the moments in your life. There is no right answer to that question. In fact, there is no one best way to answer any of the big questions in life. You are part of nature, and you are designed to be successful. In nature there is no right or wrong. Far too many people work

hard to change what they were designed to be – unique. Success is an individual matter, and the idea of “the one right answer” or “the best way” is merely an illusion. Just as no two flowers are exactly alike or need exactly the same nutrients to grow, no two people are exactly alike and no two people can take exactly the same path in life. Figuring out who you want to be allows you to be like water - fluid and seamlessly adjusting to each situation.

There is an old joke about a preacher who was giving his usual sermon when all of a sudden there was a cloudburst. After about one full hour of complete non-stop rain, everyone began to evacuate because the whole church was flooding, but the preacher just stood there preaching in the ankle-deep water.

A man drives by in a car and shouts through the church doors, "Preacher, you better get out of there before you drown!"

The preacher replied, "Don't worry. God will save me."

The man then drove away.

The water was now knee-deep and a man in a raft floated over to the church and said to the preacher, "You better get in here before you drown!"

Despite the second warning, the preacher just stood there and replied, "Don't worry. God will save me."

The man then rowed away.

The water was now waist-deep and a man in a powerboat came to the preacher and said, "You better get out of there before you drown!"

Despite the third warning, the preacher just stood there and replied, "Don't worry. God will save me." With that, the man jetted away.

The water was now neck-deep and a man in a helicopter came by and yelled to the preacher, "You better get out of there before you drown!"

The preacher refused to move and replied, "Don't worry. God will save me."

With that, the man flew away.

The water then got so deep that the preacher was sucked under and died. When he opened his eyes, he noticed that he was in heaven.

He then saw God and asked, "Oh God! Why didn't you save me from that horrible flood?"

God then replied, "I sent you a car, a raft, a power boat, and a helicopter! What else do you want from me?"

The opportunities are there, you need to recognize them and if you want your life to be different, you have to participate in making it different. I read once that only three out of every 100 people will participate in their own rescue. If you want to stop being a victim and start working towards independence, you need to start rescuing yourself. A lot of the time that means paying attention to what is right in front of you, unlike the preacher. The ideas in this book are here to encourage you to partake in the course of your life. If you've already been knocked down and are struggling to stand on your own two feet trying to take control of your life, reading this book and doing the work it suggests can bring you messages of hope. This book is full of models of possibilities and suggestions on how to make your time count by creating a life of independence through self-discipline; it is useless if you don't participate.

In the back of this book, you will find stories from individuals who may once have been where you are and thinking what you are thinking right now. Each of them wanted to find a way to reach back and help someone else. I share their stories with their permission; their hope is that you will read them with an open heart and a reflective mind. At the end of every chapter, you will be provided with road signs that signal you are on the road to independence. Take a few minutes and be your own personal GPS... see if you are heading where you want to go. This means you need to know where you want to go.

Start right now by thinking about your dash and what you want it to mean, what legacy you want to leave.

- Road Signs -

1. Make your time count.
2. Think about your legacy.
3. Participate in your own rescue.