Beyond time management: how the latest research on time perspective and perceived time use can assist clients with time-related concerns

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Abstract

In this article questions such as "What is a good use of time?" and "How can one's relationship with time contribute to their well-being?" are raised and discussed with regard to empirical research on various aspects of psychology of time. In the fist part of the paper, the construct of time perspective is considered. It is argued that a balanced time perspective is associated with the highest levels of well-being. The second part draws on qualitative and quantitative research and addresses the concept of perceived time use. Four factors, are shown to play a major role in how people spend their time and how happy they feel with it: liking what one does and perceiving it as worthwhile, balance, responsibility and achievement, and time anxiety and lack of control. The last part of the paper considers practical implications of psychology of time for coaches and other professionals.

Keywords: Time management; time use, time perspective; well-being

Introduction

Time is an important issue for most people, especially in the West. We save it, spend it, waste it; we never have enough of it. The concept of "time famine" has become a familiar slogan in both academic literature and popular media (Banks, 1983). "Time crunch", the feeling of being rushed all the time is experienced as a daily phenomenon by 34% of population, with 61% reporting never having excess time and 40% of time use survey respondents stating that time is a bigger problem for them than money (Robinson and Godbey, 1997). Many feel they are no longer in charge of their own time, that time is driving them instead. The feeling of being busy is no longer limited to the work setting and has been incorporated into the leisure schedule, which too has become the subject to time planning and productivity. Robinson and Godbey (1997 p.25) write: "Time has become the most precious commodity and the ultimate scarcity".

The answer to this time scarcity problem seems simple. An increase in free time would almost certainly relieve the pressure and release people from the temporal imprisonment they find themselves in. Yet, social scientists studying time use patterns have discovered a paradox: the last four-five decades have already witnessed this desired increase in free time. Although there are some conflicting opinions on this point, it appears that we have, on average, since 1965 gained between 5 and 7 free hours a week (Robinson and Godbey, 1997; Pentland et al, 1999). So, time devoted to work has declined, and yet the respondents believe that it has increased. We have more time, yet we feel we have less. Time use literature points to a very large discrepancy between people's estimates of their

time use and the actuality of it (Sullivan and Gershuny, 2001). On average, respondents estimate that they have fewer than 20 hours of free time a week, which is about half of what is actually reported in time diaries.

An increase in free time does not even appear to lead to increased leisure satisfaction. There is a further paradox with time use in leisure, characterised by two contradictory tendencies – increase in passive leisure and intensification of time devoted to active leisure. First of all, increases in free time have been found to be largely devoted to television viewing, even though it is rated relatively low in terms of pleasure and was found to be associated with boredom, low level of concentration, low level of potency, lack of clarity of thought and lack of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). While nearly a third of all free time (more than 14 hours a week, Robinson, 1999) is reported being spent in front of the television, significantly less time is spent engaging in activities rated as most pleasurable, such as socialising and outside activities (Tyrell, 1995). However, when people do engage in active leisure, it often becomes the subject of the phenomenon of "time deepening" – cramming a larger number of activities into a shorter amount of time. Time-deepening assumes that it is more advantageous to develop the highest possible rate of "doing", at the expense of following an "either-or" principle. This is done by speeding up activities, choosing the activities that can be done quickly over those which take more time, doing more than one thing at once, and choosing leisure activities depending on how much time is available. While time deepening may have advantages in terms of accomplishment, it results in feelings of fragmentation and time strain (Robinson and Godbey, 1997).

There seems to be an imbalance between a perceived lack of time, spending a significant proportion of time in low satisfaction passive leisure and then putting oneself under pressure to maximize satisfaction from active leisure. Russell writes: "To be able to fill leisure intelligently is the last product of civilization, and at present very few people have reached that level" (cited in Lane, 1995, p.16).

It appears that the problem in relation to time crunch lies not in the amount of time available, not in having to manage it successfully in order to squeeze out an extra hour of a day, but in learning how to balance time in such a way that it contributes to one's well-being and satisfaction with life. But what is a good use of time? How can time be used so that it does contribute to well-being? How can the experience of time pressure be avoided so that time is no longer perceived as an enemy? How can one find a balance between work and leisure and satisfaction in both? How can we, as coaches and mentors, assist our clients in regaining a feeling of control over their time? This paper is an attempt to provide some answers to the above questions. Drawing on the body of psychological research on time and the empirical work of the author, it challenges some misconceptions underlying traditional approaches to time intervention and time management. Moreover, the paper provides useful pointers towards techniques and intervention strategies which are consistent with empirical findings.

The paper is structured in three parts. The first part addresses the construct of time perspective, paying specific attention to the relationship between time perspective and well-being. The second part discusses the notion of perceived time use and factors that are important for our use of time, drawing on two empirical studies of the author. It also

considers the relationship of time use with well-being and culminates with the working model of time use. Both constructs of time perspective and perceived time use were chosen because they belong to the subjective paradigm of time. The final part discusses how the findings from research on time perspective and time use can be applied to the practice of coaches and mentors faced with the task of devising a suitable time management intervention for an individual client or a group. It contains practical suggestions and exercises, which can be a useful addition to the 'coaching toolbox'.

Time perspective

Time perspective is a powerful influence on many aspects of human behaviour. It represents an individual's way of relating to the psychological concepts of past, present and future. Lennings (1996) gives a definition of time perspective as "a cognitive operation that implies both an emotional reaction to imagined time zones (such as future, present or past) and a preference for locating action in some temporal zone…" (p. 72). In other words, time perspective (TP) relates to whether we focus on our past, present or future when we make decisions and take action. Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) suggest that although TP may be affected by situational forces, such as inflation, being on vacation or under survival stresses, it can become a relatively stable personality trait when a particular temporal bias comes to predominate one's outlook and behaviour. Thus, frequently people come to exhibit one dominant temporal orientation.

A single, integrated scale for measuring TP has been developed which has suitable psychometric properties. The Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) is reliable, valid and easy to use. Five main factors underlie the ZTPI – past-negative, past-positive, present-hedonistic, present-fatalistic and future factors. These were derived from series of exploratory studies and have been continuously empirically refined (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999)

Let us consider each of these factors individually, giving a flavour of what different time perspectives relate to. The person who is <u>Future-oriented</u> is concerned with working for future goals and rewards, often at the expense of present enjoyment, delaying gratification, and avoiding time-wasting temptations. People with future TP are more likely to floss their teeth, eat healthy foods, and get medical checkups regularly. They tend to be more successful than others, both academically and in their careers. The third little pig who built his house from bricks, anticipating possible dangers, was surely a future-oriented pig. Items on the Future TP (FTP) scale include, amongst others, *Meeting tomorrow's deadline and doing other necessary work comes before tonight's play;* and *When I want to achieve something, I set goals and consider specific means for reaching those goals.*

The ZTPI distinguishes between two very different ways of being focused on the present. The <u>Present-Hedonistic</u> person lives in the moment, in the here and now, is a pleasure seeker, enjoys high intensity activities, seeks thrills and new sensations, and is open to adventures. He or she would score highly on items such as, *I take risks to put excitement in my life.* Children are primarily present-hedonistically oriented. The down side of this orientation is that such behaviour can have consequences. Present-Hedonists are at risk of giving in to temptations, leading to virtually all addictions, accidents and injuries, and academic and career failure. The <u>Present-Fatalistic TP</u>, on the other hand, is associated

with helplessness, hopelessness and a belief that outside forces control one's life, for e.g. spiritual or governmental forces. This TP orientation is expressed by statements including, *it doesn't make sense to worry about the future, since there is nothing that I can do about it anyway;* and *Fate determines much in my life.*

The Past TP is associated with focus on family, tradition, continuity of self over time, and a focus on history. This can be either positive or negative. The Past-Positive TP reflects a warm, pleasurable, often sentimental and nostalgic view of one's past with emphasis on maintaining relationships with family and friends. Past-Positive scale contains items such as, *Happy memories of good times spring readily to mind*; and *I enjoy stories about how things used to be in the "good old times".* The Past-Negative TP is characterized by items such as, *Painful past experiences keep being replayed in my mind, and* is associated with focusing on personal experiences that were aversive or unpleasant.

The TP construct has been found to be related to many attitudes and values, such as, educational achievement, health, sleep and dreaming patterns, romantic partner choices and more. It is also predictive for a wide range of behaviours, including risky driving, and other forms of risk taking, delinquency and sexual behaviours and also alcohol and drug abuse (Zimbardo, Keough, & Boyd, 1997; Keough, Zimbardo, & Boyd, 1999). It even predicts the extent to which unemployed people use their time constructively to seek jobs (future-oriented), or waste time watching TV and engaging in other avoidant coping strategies (present-oriented) (Epel, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 1999).

Moreover, the notion of TP can be applied to different cultures and societies. Protestant nations tend to be more future-oriented than Catholic nations (due to the enduring legacy of the Protestant work ethics). In turn, the Gross National Product indices are higher among Protestant than Catholic nations. Cultures with more individualistic focus tend to be more goal-focused and future-oriented than those emphasizing collectivism. Within countries, people living in southern areas tend to be more present-oriented than those in northern regions.

Relationship between TP and Well Being
Being such a powerful influence on our behaviour, which type of TP can be considered optimal – more productive or associated with higher well-being? A large number of theorists and researchers claim that a focus on the future is fundamental to well-being and positive functioning (Kazakina, 1999; Wessman and Ricks, 1966; Kahana & Kahana, 1983; Wills, Sandy, and Yaeger, 2001). Zaleski, Cycon, & Kurc (2001), for example, found that future time perspective, and especially possession of long-term goals, positively correlated with virtually all aspects of well-being, meaningful life, social self-efficacy, and realism/persistence. On the contrary, Boniwell and Zimbardo (2004) warn of the drawbacks of excessive future orientation which are workaholism, minimizing the need for social connections, not taking time for occasional self indulgence, nor being grounded in a sense of community and cultural traditions. Our recent study on TP and well-being (WB) (Boniwell & Linley, in preparation) studied a sample of undergraduate students and found no relationship between FTP, any aspect of WB (including satisfaction with past, satisfaction with life (or present), satisfaction with future, positive affect, negative affect) and self-actualization. These, as well as findings for other types of TP, are summarised in Table 1.

Let us consider the present hedonistic time orientation. A number of scholars hypothesised that a time orientation with a focus on the present is a necessary prerequisite for well-being. Amongst them are Csikszentmihalyi, Maslow, and Schopenhauer, with their emphasis on the value of here-and-now experiences (Boyd-Wilson et al., 2002). Some empirical support for this claim has been found in correlations between present orientation and various measures of well-being, including general happiness (Kammann & Flett, 1983), and life satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). However, our study established only modest levels of correlations between Present Hedonistic TP and Temporal Satisfaction with Life, generally below .3 and not exceeding .32 for Satisfaction with Past. Perhaps, the downsides of this orientation (like "the morning after" experiences) play a role in decreasing one's life satisfaction. Nevertheless, Present Hedonistic TP showed a higher level of correlation with Positive Affect at .37, which was expected, as this temporal orientation is aimed at maximising current feelings of joy and excitement.

In a sample of older adults, Kazakina (1999) has established a relationship between positive past orientation and life satisfaction and between present positive perspective and positive affect. Similarly, our own findings show that Past Positive TP correlates very well with Satisfaction with Past at .52, and with Satisfaction with Life & Satisfaction with Future at .32 & .33 respectively, whilst Past Negative TP correlates negatively with all aspects of Life Satisfaction and Self-actualization and has a strong positive association with NA (.48). These findings are consistent with Zimbardo's own interpretations of Past Positive individuals who have the highest sense of self esteem and happiness as compared to those dominant on the other factors. If a positive past temporal orientation is so essential for our well-being, does it mean that we should abandon all other activities and focus on reconnecting with family, friends and community values, because this is what is likely to bring us happiness? Perhaps we shouldn't worry about studying or taking time for ourselves? What about the drawbacks of the Past TP, which include being excessively conservative, cautious, avoiding change and openness to new experiences and cultures, sustaining the status quo, even when it is not in the person's best interest, or trying to apply old solutions to the new problems? Is developing a Past Positive TP the best one could do?

Balanced Time Perspective
Each of the TP factors may have some personal value, but when they come to be an excessive orientation that excludes or minimizes the others, then they may become dysfunctional. There are costs and sacrifices associated with emphasising any of the individual time perspectives, whether the focus is on achievement-oriented, "workaholic" Future TP, on Hedonistic present, or on nostalgic Past (which is an infrequent TP in the modern society). Here is where the ideal of a 'Balanced Time Perspective' comes into play. It is proposed as a more positive alternative to living life as a slave to any particular temporal bias. "In an optimally balanced time perspective, the past, present and future components blend and flexibly engage, depending on a situation's demands and our needs and values" (Zimbardo, 2002, p.62).

What does it mean to have a balanced TP? People with a balanced time perspective are capable of operating within a temporal mode appropriate to the situation they find themselves in. So when they spend time with their families and friends they are fully with them and value the opportunity to connect with each other. When they take a day off work, they get involved in recreation rather than feel guilty about the work they haven't done.

However, when working and studying they approach a situation from the perspective of the future and work more productively. Flexibility and "switch-ability" are essential components of a balanced TP.

Are people with a balanced TP likely to be happier than the rest of us? Until very recently, even though there was a strong theoretical possibility for a "yes" answer, there was no consistent empirical data to support this claim (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004).

The main objective of Boniwell and Linley's (in preparation) study was to test this hypothesis. Balanced TP was operationalised as scoring in the top 50% on all three positive TPs, and in the bottom 50% on the Past Negative and Present Fatalistic orientations. As can be seen from Table 1, Balanced TP has good size significant relationships with virtually all outcome variables, many of which are higher than the relationships found between individual TP types and the aforementioned outcome variables. Although a Balanced TP is hard to achieve (e.g. only 8 % of participants had a fully balanced TP), our results suggest that it offers a key to achieving a work-life balance and a sense of well-being. The implications of these findings for professional practice will be considered in the final part of the article.

		SWPast	SWL (Present)	SWF	PA	NA	MAC
Past Neg	Pearson Correlation	-.616(**)	-.323(**)	-.347(**)	.147	-.484(**)	-.471(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.057	.000	.000
	N	170	170	169	169	169	160
Present Hed.	Pearson Correlation	.320(**)	.276(**)	.243(**)	.375(**)	-.067	.453(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.386	.000
	N	171	170	169	170	170	162
Future	Pearson Correlation	-.079	.044	.045	.139	-.020	.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.298	.568	.553	.068	.794	.993
	N	175	174	173	174	174	166
Past Pos	Pearson Correlation	.526(**)	.317(**)	.332(**)	.189(*)	-.285(**)	.314(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.013	.000	.000
	N	178	178	177	172	172	163
Present Fatal.	Pearson Correlation	-.129	-.201(**)	-.272(**)	-.169(*)	.238(**)	-.158(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.090	.008	.000	.026	.002	.043
	N	174	173	172	173	173	164
Balanced TP	Pearson Correlation	.509(**)	.396(**)	.491(**)	.307(**)	-.436(**)	.436(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	153	152	151	152	152	145

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1: Table of correlations between six types of Time Perspective and Satisfaction With Past, Satisfaction with Life (or Present), Satisfaction with Future, Positive Affect, Negative Affect and MAC.

Perceived time use: Qualitative and quantitative findings

Let us now turn to time use, or our subjective experience of the use of time, which can otherwise be called p*erceived time use*. Many studies (e.g. time diary studies) have focused on time use as something objective, calculated in minutes spent on various activities. However this focus on the objective time and its expenditure gives a poor representation of:

> a) objective outcomes of activities – for example, hours spent cleaning the house do not predict how tidy it will look, hours spent studying do not predict the exam grade;
> b) meaning people assign to the ways they spend their time;
> c) relationship of time use with constructs such as well-being – well-being was found to be independent of the amount of time spent in various activities, even in the ones that were liked most (Boniwell, 2004).

To date, there are only a handful of studies that endeavour to operationalise perceived *time use* through development of time use inventories (Temporal Experience Questionnaire by Wessman, 1973; TMBS by Macan et al, 1990; Time Structure Questionnaire by Bond & Feather, 1988). These inventories offer an array of subjective time use factors, which include: setting goals and priorities, mechanics/time utilization, perceived control of time, preference for organization/structured routine, time pressure/time anxiety, long-term personal direction/sense of purpose, personal consistency/persistence, time flexibility and present orientation. Some of these factors overlap; some have been identified by one study only. It is unclear which of these factors carry most weight and whether there exist any other factors not yet identified by the creators of inventories. Furthermore, none of the above studies were founded in exploratory qualitative investigations. Currently, existing research provides an incomplete representation of the phenomenon of perceived time use, which motivated the author to undertake two studies into this construct. The findings from both studies are described below, albeit very briefly, due to the limitations of space.

Study 1: Methodology and Results

The objectives of the first study were: to explore participants' subjective experience of time use; to identify the factors contributing to time use; and to explore associations between perceived time use and well being. The study employed a qualitative design using semi-structured in-depth interviews. Following transcription, the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith and Osborn, 2003) was used and then verified by a secondary analyst. Purposive sampling was used to recruit 22 participants, half of whom were largely satisfied with their time use, and half of whom were largely dissatisfied with their time use. Participants were from various socio-economic and professional backgrounds. An interview schedule was used to form the basis of all interviews but, the exact structure of each interview varied. Transcripts were analysed with the help of NVivo software. 148 emergent themes were identified from the interview data. The emergent themes were clustered into ten super-ordinate themes, which then fell into four overarching categories: motivation/factors that influence time use; organisation; execution and evaluation. Table 2 summarises super-ordinate themes and the overarching categories. Coherence or congruence between life goals and the way life is lead appeared to play an important role in perceived time use. Some other factors, including taking responsibility

for one's time, balance between discipline and adaptability were not previously identifies in the literature. Furthermore, the data pointed towards the presence of a relationship between time use and well-being, which was mainly manifested as a negative relationship, with participants feeling unhappy when they thought they were not using their time well (Boniwell & Henry, 2005).

CATEGORY	SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES
MOTIVATION	Life goals and worthwhile activities (48)
	Liking what one does (54)
ORGANISATION	Balance and variety of activities (115)
	Prioritisation & acceptance of limits (88)
	Time management mechanics (50)
EXECUTION	Discipline & adaptability (110)
	Taking responsibility & feeling in control (97)
	Achievement vs. wasting time (109)
EVALUATION	Reflection, evaluation (47)
	Time anxiety & perspectives on time (65)

Table 2: Themes arising from the qualitative study on perceived time use and well-being

Study 2: Methodology and Results

A subsequent survey study was carried out, testing the conclusions derived from the qualitative research. The rationale underlying this study was to investigate whether the factors identified in the previous study were replicated with a larger sample and to see which ones carry more weight. The second objective was to look at the relationship between the perceived time use and subjective well-being, sense of coherence and locus of control. The study employed a survey design using postal questionnaires, consisting of five scales (Perceived Use of Time; Sense of Coherence Scale, Locus of Control Scales, Satisfaction with Life Scale, PANAS Scales). The questionnaires were sent to 400 randomly selected students on all Open University courses. The analysis was based on the data from 173 respondents who completed the survey.

The first step was to carry out an exploratory factor analysis of the first inventory (Perceived Use of Time), developed for this research. A principle component analysis of the 69 items produced 19 unrotated factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, and these explained 70.7% of variance. After detailed examination of the variables, 23 items were omitted from the analysis. The factor analysis of the remaining items with Varimax rotation produced four factors (see below), which explained 46% of the common variance. The reliability analysis of the factor scales has shown very good reliability with

Chronbach's alpha coefficients above .8. (KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .864) The factors identified are briefly discussed below.

1. Factor 1: Liking what one does and perceiving it as worthwhile (12.3% of variance; n = 13; α = .881). The scale contains items such as Looking at a typical day in my life, *I think that most things I do have some purpose* and *I like what I do*

2. Factor 2: Balance (11.8% of variance; n = 9; α = .866). It is exemplified by items such as *I have a balance between what I want to do and what I have to do* and *I am comfortable with the work-life boundaries in my life*.

3. Factor 3: Time anxiety and lack of control (11.2% of variance; n = 10; α = .836). The items on this scale include, amongst others: *I feel time is slipping away through my fingers* and *I feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities*.

4. Factor 4: Responsibility and Achievement (11.0% of variance; n = 12; α = .853). Questions such as *I often check if I am making the best use of my time* and *I usually achieve something within each day provide* a good illustration of the items on this scale.

Finally, the correlations between individual TU factors, a total TU score, and a number of constructs, including SWL, PA, NA, Sense of Coherence, and Locus of Control were examined. Table 3 below shows correlations between the total TU score and these variables, all of which are of good size and highly significant.
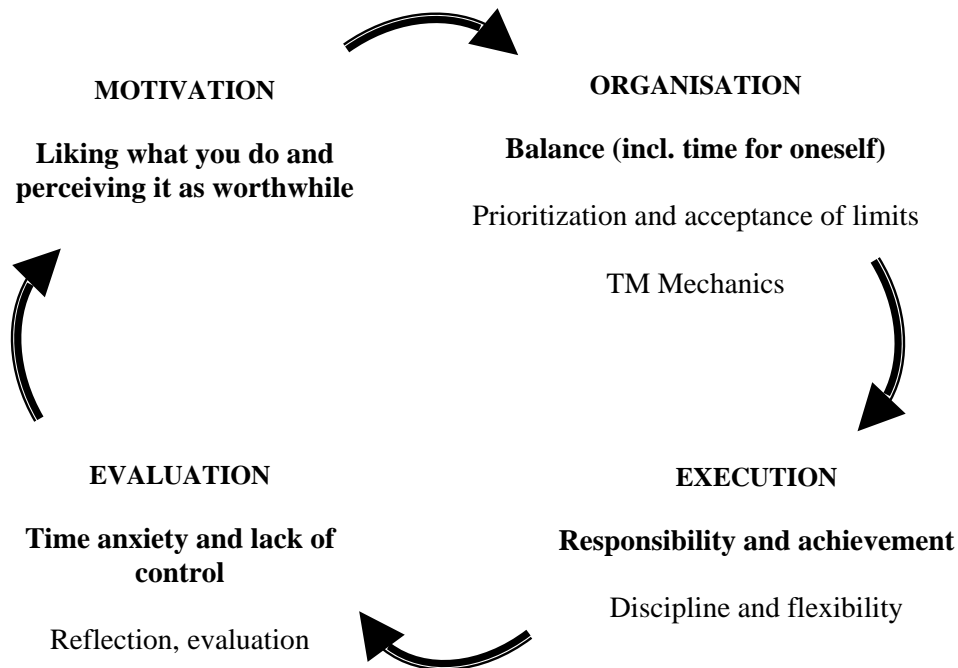
		TU_TOTAL	SWL	PA	NA	SOC	INT_LOC	EXT_LOC
TU_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	1	.590(**)	.462(**)	-.484(**)	.646(**)	.343(**)	-.243(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001
	N	173	173	169	172	172	171	173

Table 3: Table of correlations between the total perceived time use score and satisfaction with life (SWL), positive affect (PA), negative affect (NA), sense of coherence (SOC), internal and external loci of control.

General Discussion

The combined results of both studies suggest a working model of perceived time use presented in Figure 1. It shows the interactions between different stages in the process of time use and outlines the factors comprising each of these stages. The factors that are emphasised in bold have been replicated with a larger sample, and are, therefore, considered as carrying more weight than others. Each of the time use factors will be briefly discussed beneath in order to put some flesh on these conceptual bones.

How well we use our time depends on how motivated we are to engage in certain activities. This is why Liking what you do and perceiving it as worthwhile is a starting point in the time use model below (Fig. 1). This factor also draws on a sense of congruence between one's life goals and their life activities. It corresponds to what is known as intrinsic and identified (based on full subscription to underlying values) motivation (Sheldon, 2001).

MOTIVATION

Liking what you do and perceiving it as worthwhile

ORGANISATION

Balance (incl. time for oneself)

Prioritization and acceptance of limits

TM Mechanics

EVALUATION

Time anxiety and lack of control

Reflection, evaluation

EXECUTION

Responsibility and achievement

Discipline and flexibility

Figure 1: The facets of perceived time use

Whilst work-life balance is a familiar notion in modern life, the factor of <u>Balance</u> has not yet made its way to time use questionnaires. There are two components of this theme, which are worth paying attention to. The first one is having some time for yourself on a daily basis. This is a very strong message coming from both studies – people who are satisfied with their time use make some time for themselves regularly. The next point concerns the boundary system adopted by an individual. We tend to think it's vitally important to strictly demarcate the boundaries between work and home, work and leisure, etc. Yet, the data shows that it does not matter what boundary system an individual chooses, what does, is whether he or she is happy with it.

<u>Prioritisation and acceptance of limits</u> involves making choices on what to spend one's time, taking into account not only urgency and importance of the activity but one's limits.

<u>Time management mechanics</u> refers to everything that is usually understood by time management: organisation, manageability, planning, doing things in advance, paper planning (lists, diaries, etc), using technology for organisation of time, multitasking, support structures, good memory, etc. Although frequently mentioned, this factor produced very mixed responses, with many participants who consider themselves happy and efficient in time utilization not reporting any time management behaviours. Furthermore, time management mechanics did not emerge as a factor in the second study. These results are consistent with previous research which has found that time management training has little or no effect on time management behaviours, job satisfaction or performance (Macan, 1994, 1996; Macan et al, 1990). These are quite amazing findings, taking into account financial and otherwise resources invested by companies into time management training. Perhaps, the failure of time management training to produce desired results may be

attributed to basing it on the objective paradigm of time and thus focusing on the wrong thing – behaviour rather than psychology of time.

Taking responsibility for one's time means adopting a proactive rather than reactive attitude in relation to it, preventing oneself from feeling over stressed (which can be achieved through making justified choices). <u>Responsibility and achievement</u> factor refers also to the frequently mentioned theme of achievement. When people talk about time, they talk about achievement – completion, meeting deadlines and feeling progress.

The plans are not set in stone, they need to be adjusted according to the needs and demands of one's own self and environment. This is the message that underpins the <u>Discipline and flexibility</u> factor. On the one hand, this theme is about being disciplined, "getting on with it" and acting on priorities, on the other – about adaptability and flexibility.

<u>Time anxiety and lack of control</u> reflects feelings of time as running out and of not being able to exercise any control over it, which were voiced out by the majority of participants who felt dissatisfied with their time.

Finally, the theme of <u>Reflection, evaluation</u> refers to being able to reflect on one's time, being satisfied or dissatisfied with one's time use. Reflection allows one to consider whether their time is being spent on something they either enjoy or consider meaningful, thus concluding the time use cycle. However, although frequently mentioned by the participants in the first study, it was not identified as a factor in the second one.

Implications for coaching and other "helping by talking" practices

How does knowledge derived from empirical research translate to one-to-one work with clients? What tools and tips can psychology of time offer to practitioners? Based on the results presented here, several suggestions are considered in this part of the chapter:

- Fist of all, coaches can identify their client's dominant time perspective (TP) and those that are underdeveloped. The client's TP profile can be measured using the 56-item ZTPI (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999). Alternatively, coach's own questioning and observation skills can be used to determine client's temporal preferences.

- A key coaching point is often reached when the client becomes aware that a certain way of looking at things is linked to a certain habitual response. A current way of thinking may be based on being stuck in a temporal orientation that is not appropriate for the situation. Highlighting the disadvantages of an over-dominant TP may help the client to shift their perspective (Boniwell and Zimbardo, 2004).

- Our Western culture places an emphasis on the value of the future TP. However, an awareness of the fact that future TP is not associated with happiness, may help one to challenge the societal paradigm on an individual level. Switching to a Positive Past TP by giving an old friend a ring, reconnecting with the family or looking through a photo album, may contribute much better to a client's sense of well-being. Although this suggestion may appear to go against one of the core premises of coaching, with its primary focus on the present and future, it does not refer to the traumas arising from the past but, rather, to positive conceptions of the past.

- If a client exhibits a strong Past Negative perspective and his or her coach does not have a background in counselling, that might be their clue to refer this client to either counselling or psychotherapy.

- The concept of TP allows us to step away from advocating generalized time management strategies (which frequently follow a "one size fits all" principle), and to develop interventions based on an understanding of an individual's specific TP profile. Thus, for example, a person who is chronically future oriented may benefit from permitting him/herself to take some time off, whilst a person who is Present-Hedonistically oriented may benefit from bringing in more structure and exercising delayed gratification.

- Furthermore, an exploration of one's relationship with time has a potential to develop fuller evaluations of one's life, through finding the links and connections between past and present events and future aspirations. Doing so may help to develop a sense of continuity between time perspectives and even facilitate the process of finding a deeper meaning in one's life.

- Coaching clients to be more flexible in using past, present and future can be liberating. Coaching can enable the clients to stay focused on one temporal dimension when this is what is needed, and to "switch off" when appropriate. Development of such flexibility can contribute to development of a more balanced TP, which, amongst other benefits, was shown to be associated with a higher level of well-being.

The practical suggestions below are based on the conclusions derived from research on perceived time use.

- Both of the studies considered above and other research on time management suggest that we do not need to get overly enthusiastic about time management tricks, such as diaries, lists, ticks, palm held organisers, etc. These are precisely the options that clients are likely to come up with, but these are also the actions that are most likely to be quickly left behind.
- It is important to make sure that clients are engaged in activities they either like doing or, as far as the activities they like less are concerned, really know why they are doing them. If they do not and if they cannot subscribe fully to the values underlying their behaviour, it might be more beneficial for clients' psychological well-being to reconsider their choice of activities.
- A balanced use of time does not mean equal allocation of time to work and leisure, it does not even necessarily mean investing more time into leisure. A sense of balance is subjective and varies greatly between people. For one person, spending an hour a week on their favourite hobby is sufficient, while for another an hour a day is not enough. What is important to emphasise is finding some time for oneself on a frequent if not daily basis, and being comfortable with work-leisure boundaries.
- It might be difficult for clients to have a sense of achievement, especially when they are working on a long-term project. To compensate, it is important to complete something every day – it may be something very simple like doing the dishes, or helping a child with a piece of homework.

- The feeling that time is slipping through one's fingers and time anxiety can be counteracted by developing internal locus of control (e.g. through visualisation, and other techniques, see Popovic, 2004).

Conclusion

This article considered how research on different aspects of psychology of time could enrich and inform the practice of coaching. Both constructs of time perspective and time use were offered as tools for enhancing well-being. A list of practical implications proposed is by no means exhaustive and can certainly benefit from further research and discussion.

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