

“ feel like I’m suffocating.”

As he spoke, Bob’s bones seemed to crumble with exhaustion. *“I like what I do and I love the people I work with, but no matter how hard I work or how many hours I put in, there’s never enough*

BY KAY CANNON | *time to get everything done.”* An

unexpected voice shattered the space around us. “Bob, do you have a minute? I need your opinion on something.” A guy stood expectantly in the open door to Bob’s office. Like an apologetic steamroller, the new fellow continued. “Oops! I’m sorry. I didn’t realize you had anyone in your office. I hope I’m not interrupting, but this will only take a minute.”

As if on cue, Bob spoke up. “It’s OK, Jack. Is it something that we can talk about later or do we need to discuss it now?” Jack charged ahead. “If you don’t mind, I’d really rather run it by you now. It will only take a minute. It’s important.” For a split second Bob seemed to be caught in a silent tug-o-war between Jack’s request and our meeting that had been abruptly interrupted. Bob nodded in my direction. “Please excuse us. It will only take a minute.”

A few minutes later Jack thanked Bob and left. As Bob settled back into his chair, he said, “You will have to excuse the interruption. I should have closed my door. People are always stopping by to talk

It Will ONLY Take a MINUTE ESCAPING THE TIME WARP

about things. Hmmm ... where were we? Oh, yes. I never have enough time to get things done.”

Are you drowning in a sea of time starvation? Gotta minute? There’s something important we need to discuss.

“It will only take a minute. What’s a minute? I can squeeze one more minute into my jam packed schedule.” How often have you discovered that the one minute turns into 15, 30 or even 60 minutes? As the unplanned minutes add up, a tape recorded chant crescendos in your head. “I don’t have time for this. I don’t have time for this. I don’t have time for this!” Sound familiar? Zoom. Zoom. Zoom. Welcome to the Time Warp.

Now, more than ever before in the history of mankind, we feel trapped in a non-stop battle with time. This battle is literally eating us alive second by second. “Hey! Wait a minute!” you say. “Trapped by time? That makes no sense. We are time’s

masters. We do more with less. We slice and dice our days with time management skills. We use high-tech tools like wireless PDAs, webinars and instant messaging to squeeze out every last drop of time. We are connected in real time to the world 24/7. We multi-task as we pursue worklife balance. Time is our tool and we control it.” It’s that delusional thinking that has created the Time Warp in which we are living and working.

Since you don’t have much time, I’ll get right to the point.

The problem with time is in your head. Time is not the enemy. It’s our twisted way of thinking about time that is slowly eroding our lives. Think about it. We can count on time. In our wild world of constant change, time is one of the few things that remain constant: 60 seconds equal one minute; 60 minutes equal one hour; 12 months equal one year. No matter how much technology we throw at it, time is not going to change. Time marches on, unimpressed with our attempts to outmaneuver. Escaping from the Time Warp is up to you! Your life depends upon it!

FIVE TIPS FOR ESCAPING THE TIME WARP

I. Close the door. Create sacred office hours just for you. In our efforts to be perceived as kind and caring open-door leaders, many of us have forgotten that doors

have hinges. When overwhelmed by unfinished work, even the most caring leader can turn into Crankenstein.

Close your office door to create an “interruption-free work zone.” Tell everyone in advance what you are doing and why so that they don’t jump to the wrong conclusion. Request that your co-workers respect your sacred office hours. Tell them you must not be interrupted unless there is an emergency. Then – since we each have a different definition of what constitutes an emergency – tell them what you consider to be an emergency. Post a humorous reminder outside of your office or cubicle to gently remind people not to interrupt you. One client used a Chick-Fil-A cardboard cow. Her co-workers loved it! Once you’ve established your office hours, make them sacred. Refuse to put up with interruptions. It will take a while for everyone to get used to your new routine. Gently, kindly and patiently ask the interrupting person to come back when your office hours are over.

2. MAKE PEACE WITH “NO.” Many of us struggle with the word “no.” We’ve become conditioned to believe that being a good employee, team member, boss, spouse or parent means saying yes and then struggling nobly and heroically to deliver on expectations. On the flip side, when someone tells us “no” we often take it personally and get defensive or feel hurt. Learn to say “no” as easily as you say “yes.”

If you have trouble saying “no,” ask for some time to thoughtfully consider the request before responding. Realize that when you say “no” to one thing you are

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also saying “yes” to something else. For example, when you say “no” to a dinner invitation you may be saying “yes” to a rejuvenating evening at home. Examine both options and choose what best serves your most important priorities.

If you get angry or feel hurt when someone tells you “no,” take a close look at your reaction. Your anger or hurt is not about them, it’s about you. What makes the “no” feel so personal? What assumptions are you making? Do a truth check. Put yourself in the other person’s shoes to gain a better perspective.

3. TIME IS NOT A TOOL. IT’S A GIFT. With a guilty giggle a dear friend recently confided that, for the first time in her 20-something-year career, she was going to take a two-week vacation. She went on to say that she felt “sinful” for being away from work so long.

We’ve been taught that time is a tool to be used to get things done. In reality, time is a gift of life to be savored and treasured. Time invested in resting, reflecting and playing is just as important and noble as time invested in working. Time is our partner, not our enemy.

4. BE RESPECTFUL. While recently traveling on business I stopped in the ladies room between flights. To my complete astonishment, the woman in the stall next to me was on her cell phone engaged in a serious business conversation while heeding the call of Mother Nature. Talk about a Time Warp! Please don’t sacrifice common courtesy and common sense in the name of multi-tasking.

Technology has turned many of us into spoiled, rude brats. With cell phones and instant messaging, we’ve gotten used to having people at our finger tips. We expect people to drop whatever they may be doing to talk with us. We get impatient or angry if we have to wait too long for a return phone call or e-mail. We want attention and we want it now! Chill out. Be respectful. The kindness and consideration will be returned to you a hundred times over.

5. “WASTE” SOME TIME EACH DAY. What have you chopped out of your life because your rational and logical self just couldn’t justify spending time on it? Sleeping eight hours a night? Eating lunch? Calling your college roommate? Planting flowers for your mother? Reading to your child? Taking a Saturday afternoon nap? Looking at the stars on a clear summer night? Remember that the only thing that exists is the present moment. The past is gone and the future may never be. Treat yourself to a moment’s joy. It will only take a minute. ■

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