The 10 Natural Laws of Successful Time & Life Management

Proven Strategies for Increased Productivity and Inner Peace

Hyrum W. Smith

Main Idea
The real measure of a successful life is whether or not inner peace is achieved. Inner peace is the transcendent feeling of fulfillment and personal well-being which comes whenever a person is living their life in conformity with their inner core values. The simple concept of making sure your daily activities reflect your deepest core values lies at the very heart of effective time and life management.

Part 1. Managing Your Time

Law 1
You control your life by controlling your time.

Law 2
Your governing values are the foundation of personal fulfillment.

Law 3
When your daily activities reflect your governing values, you experience inner peace.

Law 4
To reach any significant goal, you must leave your comfort zone.

Law 5
Daily planning leverages time through increased focus.

Part 2. Managing Your Life

Law 6
Your behavior is a reflection of what you truly believe.

Law 7
You satisfy needs when your beliefs are in line with reality.

Law 8
Negative behaviors are overcome by changing incorrect beliefs.

Law 9
Your self-esteem must ultimately come from within.

Law 10
Give more and you’ll have more.
You control your life by controlling your time.

Main Idea
The real objective of any time management program is to achieve inner peace, but the best perspective from which to accomplish this is to stop thinking "time management" and instead think "event control".

Supporting Ideas
Inner peace is defined as having serenity, balance and harmony in your life through the appropriate control of events.

Many people get so caught up trying to manage events over which they have no control that they get discouraged and become conditioned to accept less than they could be if they live their lives to the fullest possible extent. Other people live their entire lives thinking that at some unspecified time in the future, they're going to have more time to do what really counts and less interruptions.

The real key of time management is that the greater amount of control you have over those things that are most important to you, the better you will feel about your life’s accomplishments and the higher amount of self-esteem will be generated.

Therefore, rather than asking "How do I get more time?", instead ask these two questions:

1. What are my highest priorities in life?
2. Of these priorities, what do I value the most?

Once you've identified these factors, the key issue then becomes how do you go about getting control of the most critical events?

From this perspective, time management becomes much more than a simple game of trying to be more and more efficient. It turns into an exercise of trying to spend the maximum amount of time on those things that are most important rather than most urgent.

There is an important distinction between something that is vital and something that is urgent. Generally speaking, an urgent task demands immediate attention, but may not necessarily be very important. Some of the most important tasks in life are never urgent, even though they are extremely vital. Other tasks may never be important but they will appear urgent.

The secret is to identify your vital activities and instill them with a sense of urgency so they can compete effectively with the numerous urgent but unimportant tasks that will come along every day of your life.

Key Thoughts
“Doest thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that's the stuff life is made of.”

– Benjamin Franklin
### LAW 2

**Main Idea**

A set of governing values are the clearest answers you personally can give to those two questions:

1. What are my highest priorities in life?
2. Of these priorities, what do I value the most?

**Supporting Ideas**

Every person lives life according to their own personal set of character traits and beliefs which are considered to be the most valuable and worthwhile. This is a unique value judgment that each person makes for himself or herself.

There is, however, a difference between having a set of values and identifying those values. Some people go their entire lives without stopping to think about which values are most important to their happiness and peace of mind.

One way to identify your personal values is to write your own personal constitution - a prioritized list of your governing values with a brief sentence or paragraph describing what each value means to you personally.

Until you write your personal constitution, you cannot effectively plan your time.

In a survey carried out in the United States in 1992, the following values were most commonly mentioned:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial security</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Personal health &amp; fitness</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Children and family</td>
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<td>Spirituality/Religion</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of accomplishment</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrity and honesty</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Occupational satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love for others/Service</td>
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<td>Education and learning</td>
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<td>Taking responsibility</td>
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<td>Exercising leadership</td>
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<td>Inner harmony</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Financial security</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intelligence and wisdom</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>Happiness/Positive attitude</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>Self-control</td>
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<td>Ambition</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>Being capable</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imagination and creativity</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beauty</td>
<td>30</td>
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In the final analysis, every person has to identify their own unique set of values. Nobody else can impose their values on another. The exercise requires absolute and total openness and honesty.

There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to the exercise of developing a personal set of governing values - a personal constitution. You don't even have to defend your choices to any other person.

The foundation for effective time management, however, is your governing values. Therefore, unless you take the time to identify those values for yourself, no other time management techniques will work.

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### LAW 3

**Main Idea**

When your daily activities reflect your governing values, you experience inner peace.

**Supporting Ideas**

Once you’ve identified your governing values, the next step is to prioritize them in order of importance. This is a vital step in preparation for those numerous occasions when goals conflict with a wide choice of conflicting daily activities.

If you don’t rank your values, you may unintentionally spend time on something of low value at the expense of something of vital importance. In addition, you may sometimes be faced with having to choose between two positives, and your priorities will help decide which course of action to pursue.

Generally speaking, a person’s career is the area in which most time is invested. Thus it follows that if a person follows a career choice which is out of sync with their governing values, they will be stressed and unproductive. That frustration can accumulate over the years, and cause people to have a major meltdown at critical times.

To maintain balance between governing values and daily activities, a person should regularly ask:

1. What is the long-range priority of this project?
2. For whom and by when must this task be completed?
3. What parts of this project could be delegated to another person?
4. Is this project more important than any other at the present time?
5. What would be the worst that would happen if I don’t complete this project?
6. Have I allocated enough time for myself and my family in estimating the time required to finish this project?
7. Are any of the tasks involved in completing this project in conflict with my personal constitution?

Value-based goal setting is designed to generate balance and harmony rather than stress. Inner peace comes from a close alignment of beliefs and actions.

If the set of values you have identified in your own personal constitution doesn’t motivate and inspire you, take the time to review your choices once again. They should represent the most exciting achievements you can imagine.

**Key Thoughts**

“What matters most in life should never be at the mercy of less important things.”

– Hyrum W. Smith
LAW 4

To reach any significant goal, you must leave your comfort zone.

Main Idea
Specific, measurable and realistic goals are the bridge between your governing values and your daily activities.

Supporting Ideas
Goals are planned conflicts with the present status quo. Achieving any goal means leaving the familiar and venturing into a new area. Many people don’t like to leave their present comfort zones, and therefore never set goals. By failing to set goals, they also fail to ever make any meaningful progress.

Long-range goals describe what you want to accomplish. Intermediate goals and daily tasks break it down into how to actually do it.

Effective goals are:
- Specific - stating exactly what is to be accomplished.
- Measurable - with dates and ways to show progress.
- Action-Oriented - specifying things to be done.
- Realistic - within reach if you stretch and work hard.
- Timely - achievable within a reasonable period of time.

Most people find it helpful to set goals in each of the following areas:
- Physical well-being
- Family/Spouse
- Spiritual/Humanitarian
- Financial
- Company/Career
- Company/Strategic
- Community/Political
- Education/Personal Development

Broadly speaking, there are three common obstacles to leaving your comfort zone:

1. Peer pressure.
   You may be afraid of what your friends, family or work associates will think, and therefore you try and live in harmony with their values rather than following your inner urges.

2. Walls.
   Sometimes you may feel walled in by past mistakes or circumstances. You may feel that circumstances beyond your control make it impossible to set out in a new direction. Remember: It really doesn’t matter what other people think.

3. Fear of Change.
   Some people would much rather live with a familiar problem than try to change and risk coming into contact with a new and unfamiliar problem.

In the final analysis, these fears should never stand in the way of setting goals which will enable you to follow your dreams. In most situations, present failure is not the end of the world, and you have the opportunity to come back again next time smarter and better prepared to succeed.

Nothing can stop a determined soul.

Key Thoughts
"There is no chance, no destiny, no fate, that can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul."

– Ella Wheeler Wilcox

LAW 5

Daily planning leverages time through increased focus.

Main Idea
If you will just take 10- to 15-minutes every day to plan your day, everyone you know will be amazed at how much you are able to achieve with your life.

Supporting Ideas
Common excuses for failing to plan time include:
1. I don’t have time to plan.
2. I already know what I need to do.
3. Planning doesn’t work. I have too many interruptions.
4. I feel tied down with long "To Do" lists.
5. I don’t know how to plan effectively.

In reality, there is not one person on earth who cannot find 15-minutes a day to sit down and plan out their next day. To do this:

1. Find a place where you can be uninterrupted.
2. Review your long-range objectives.
3. Be realistic in the amount of free time you’ll have available.
4. Set specific daily goals for tasks.
5. Tray and anticipate any obstacles that will come up.
6. Prioritize your daily tasks.

That’s all you need to do to plan your day and increase your total effectiveness by a large and measurable degree. You can later add refinements such as using planning diaries or whatever suits your personal style, but the essence of the daily planning session is summed up above.

Your daily planning should also include time for reflecting on two questions:
1. What are your highest priorities in life?
2. Of those priorities, what do you value the most?

You can further refine and improve your daily planning session by creating a meaningful prioritized daily task list by:

1. Making a list of everything you would like to accomplish that day, including tasks that are not urgent.
2. Assign a value to each item on the list, with an "A" for something vital, a "B" for something important and a "C" for something relatively trivial.
3. Give a numerical value to each item on your A-list. Then do the same for your B-list and your C-list.

You now have a prioritized list that specifies which tasks are worth finishing first. You can the focus on your A-1 until that’s achieved, and then move on to your A-2 and so on.

You can further refine your planning system by using integrated planning tools which include space for all categories, by adding financial record storage and so on. However, these embellishments are simply enhancers, and the greatest single gain in productivity will come from starting to plan your day each day regardless of the exact accessories used.

Key Thoughts
"The more time we spend on planning a project, the less total time is required for it. Don’t let today’s busy work crowd planning time out of your schedule."

– Edwin Bliss
Main Idea
There is a clear connection between what a person believes and what they do. Whenever a person’s behavior doesn’t seem to be reflecting what they claim to believe, there are some conflicting beliefs buried in there somewhere.

Supporting Ideas
Successful life management often requires a person to permanently change any behavior which is counter-productive. The mechanics of how to bring about a change in behavior is clearly set out in the Reality Model.

Specifically, to change the way a person acts, you simply need to alter their beliefs until it becomes plainly in the self-interest of the person to make those changes. When that happens, people will make better decisions and change their behavior for the right reasons.

What a person believes is a direct reflection of their personal value system. Regardless of whether these beliefs are accurate or erroneous, every person acts according to the principles they consider to be true. From that foundation, rules logically follow and behavior patterns become established. The starting point and most essential element of the entire model are the beliefs on how to meet the basic human needs.

The Reality Model can be used to help predict the types of behavior that will result if your personal beliefs are altered. You can evaluate differing sets of beliefs and thereby produce the type of behavior patterns that will lead to the results you desire.

The Reality Model can also be used to understand why another person acts the way they do, and how their beliefs need to be amended in order to modify their behavior and the results of that behavior.

Key Thoughts
“Sometimes our “beliefs” may actually be things we only think we believe because of duty or the expectations of others. The important thing to remember is that, in general, our behavior does in fact reflect what we really believe, and if our behavior doesn’t seem to be reflecting a consciously stated belief, we should take a careful look at conflicting beliefs on our window.”

— Hyrum W. Smith
**Main Idea**

It’s vitally important to examine whatever is written on your own personal beliefs window. Only once you know what’s there can you start planning how to improve and upgrade your beliefs in order to bring about the reality you most desire.

**Supporting Ideas**

Personal growth is the process of constantly upgrading the quality of whatever is in your own personal belief window. The first step in being able to do this is to accept that some of your personal beliefs may be wrong and may need to be improved. A willingness to consider this thought is generally considered an act of maturity.

The five rules for changing whatever is written on your personal belief window (and thereby gain control over your entire life) are:

1. Identify the behavior pattern which is not producing the results you desire. What is going wrong in your life and not turning out as planned.
2. Identify all the possible beliefs which could be the reason you act that way.
3. Project forward the ultimate results and future behavior which will follow if you continue to act on those beliefs. Decide whether this represents the destination you want your life to reach.
4. Identify alternative beliefs which would produce better results if followed over the long-term.
5. Project forward what would be the end result and future behavior if those alternative beliefs were incorporated into your own set of personal beliefs.

The real benefit of the five-step formula is to use it to improve yourself rather than to try and influence someone else. It’s not easy as it requires you to be subjective about some pretty deep-seated feelings, and to take responsibility for each and every action in your life.

If you want to try and motivate another person to change their reality model, try following these steps:

1. Tell the other person, “I have a problem.”
2. Give the other person a non-threatening description of the problem, from your perspective.
3. Describe to the other person how their behavior in this area makes you feel.
4. Let the realities of the situation work in your favor and motivate the other person to make a change on their own initiative.

Example:

“John, I have a problem. I’ve noticed that you’ve been late for work each morning for the past two weeks or so. I need you to know I am very uncomfortable about this. John, if you continue being late each day, do you think it will make it easier or harder for me to go to the boss and talk to him about that promotion we have been working towards?”

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**Main Idea**

The Reality Model effectively separates what you do from what you are. You can solve most of the human relations and personal productivity problems in your life by attacking incorrect beliefs and destructive behavior.

**Supporting Ideas**

Negative behavior is generally caused by trying to meet your personal needs with incorrect beliefs. Due to the fact that these beliefs are not based in the real world, they cannot logically produce behaviors and results that will satisfy the unmet needs.

Any attempt to amplify an inappropriate behavior has the effect of accelerating the negative results. This can lead to a downward spiral from which it becomes ever harder to reverse direction and begin moving steadily upwards again.

As evidence of this, consider that many negative behaviors are addictive in nature. For example:

- Overeating
- Overworking
- Smoking
- Bragging
- Oversleeping
- Child and spouse abuse
- Over-exercise

All of these negative behaviors are addictive promising short-term benefits at the expense of long-term consequences.

Therefore, the key to overcoming negative behavior lies in the Reality Model. By altering their underlying beliefs, changed (and hopefully improved) behavior follows automatically.

**Key Thoughts**

“When any of those four needs is not being met, our energy flows toward meeting that need. And if we put an incorrect assumption on our belief window, it can cause behavior that may work in the short term. But in the long term it will destroy. Will we still believe that way, even if we understand the long-term consequences? Unfortunately, we will - unless we decide to break that cycle. It is very difficult for most people to look beyond the short term.”

— Hyrum W. Smith

“I can’t tell you what belongs on your belief window. That’s nobody’s business but your own. But you do have a belief window, and you have the same four basic human needs every human being has, and you are presently putting beliefs that you think are going to meet your needs on that belief window every day. The only question is whether you are mature and confident enough to take that window off, see if those beliefs are correct, and change whichever ones are not working.”

— Hyrum W. Smith
**LAW 9**

**Main Idea**

Your self-esteem must ultimately come from within.

Everyone eventually reaches the point in life where they feel responsible for themselves. At that point, every person is responsible for whatever they have written on their own personal belief window, regardless of their background, circumstances or any other factor.

**Supporting Ideas**

Some people try and let the social climate in which they live determine what they put on their belief window. Others try and let their family members determine what is on their belief window. Eventually, though, these external pressures diminish and every person ends up accepting responsibility for their own personal beliefs.

In life, every person acts in a number of different roles - as an employee, as a relative, as a close family member, etc. In each of these roles, every person has the potential to excel. The important thing is to constantly narrow the gap between where we want to be and where we currently are.

The only path to achieving inner peace is to set ideals permanently in our minds and then refuse to compromise them and instead work steadily towards accomplishing our values.

Whatever is written on your belief window will directly influence your personal self-esteem. In the final analysis, every person can excel if they have the correct set of beliefs impressed on their personal belief window.

Whenever a person tries to respond to the beliefs written on someone else’s belief window, they invariably become confused and miserable. The only way to experience true inner peace is to gain control of your own life, not someone else’s. Everyone is unique and you should never attempt to become a dull reflection of anyone else’s personality.

The only path to achieving inner peace is to be true to the unique personality traits within you. Whenever your self-worth is based on anything outside yourself, there’s the potential for big problems over the long haul. Feeling good about yourself is a perfectly self-centered ideal that is worth pursuing.

To consider your true unique aspects, truthfully answer these questions:

1. What do you really want deep down? Separate the “should-haves” from the “ought-to’s” and decide on what it is that really matters to you the most.
2. What patterns or situations have worked for you in the past? When you’ve been successful, what were you doing? Can you recreate those circumstances again, and continue to do so consistently?

**Key Thoughts**

“The eyes of other people are the eyes that ruin us. If all buy myself were blind, I should want neither fine clothes, fine houses nor fine furniture.”  
– Benjamin Franklin

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.”  
– Henry David Thoreau

**LAW 10**

**Main Idea**

Give more and you’ll have more.

One of the great paradoxes of life is that the more you share your talents and resources with other people, the more inner peace you’ll feel in return.

**Supporting Ideas**

Two principles of giving more are:

1. **The Abundance Mentality**

   A natural law of the universe is the abundance mentality. This states that you can create more wealth than is needed for your personal comfort and security, and that you have an obligation to look at the surplus as a stewardship to be used to help other people.

   The abundance mentality applies not only to finances and material possessions but also to talents and other character based areas in life. The abundance mentality suggests that the more you share, the more you’ll actually possess in the long-term.

2. **The Servant Leader**

   Someone once noted that the world’s most powerful and influential leaders throughout history have all been good teachers. In other words, the best leaders motivate their followers to grow and perform at higher and higher levels.

   True leaders have the power to spark their students into action. They transfer knowledge along with energy to bring that knowledge into life.

   And the very best leaders empower their followers to act on their own motivation. When that situation is created, dynamic and powerful forces will be unleashed.

**Key Thoughts**

“We hold these truths to be self-evident that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among those are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”  
– Thomas Jefferson

“Men who can graft the trees and make the seed fertile and big can find no way to let the hungry people eat their produce. Men who have created new fruits in the world cannot create a system whereby their fruits may be eaten. And the failure hangs over the State like a great sorrow.”  
– Steinback
"When Benjamin Franklin was 22-years old, he conceived the "bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection." In essence, he asked himself the question: "What are my highest priorities in life?"

From this period of introspection, he emerged with twelve "virtues" - his governing values. So there would be no question in his mind what those values meant to him, he qualified each of them with a written statement. The result of this exercise is shown below:

1. Temperance
   Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.

2. Silence
   Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversations.

3. Order
   Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.

4. Resolution
   Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

5. Frugality
   Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; that is, waste nothing.

6. Industry
   Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

7. Sincerity
   Use no harmful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.

8. Justice
   Wrong none by doing injuries; or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

9. Moderation
   Avoid extremes; forebear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

10. Cleanliness
    Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes or habitation.

11. Tranquility
    Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.

12. Chastity
    Rarely use venery but for the health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.

Franklin took those twelve statements to a Quaker friend of his and asked his opinion of them. The Quaker friend looked at them and informed Franklin that he's forgotten one: humility. So Franklin added a thirteenth virtue:

13. Humility
    Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

Franklin then organized his life into thirteen week cycles, and for one week out of thirteen he would mentally focus on one of those virtues in an effort to bring his performance in line with his values.

At the age of 78, Franklin wrote in his memoirs: "On the whole, tho' I never arrived at the Perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell far short of it, yet was I by the Endeavor a better and happier Man than I otherwise would have been, if I had not attempted it".

Ben Franklin first identified his governing values, then he made a concerted effort to live his life day in, day out, according to those values.

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