

Off the Clock: Feel Less Busy While Getting More Done

Laura Vanderkam

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"I well recall a conversation with an executive I hoped to interview about her astonishing productivity. I began our call with an assurance that I would not take much of her time. She laughed. 'Oh, I have all the time in the world,' she said."

Most of us feel constantly behind, unsure how to escape feeling oppressed by busyness. Laura Vanderkam, unlike other time-management gurus, believes that in order to get more done, we must first feel like we have all the time in the world. Think about it: why haven't you trained for that 5K or read *War and Peace*? Probably because you feel beaten down by all the time you don't seem to have.

In this book, Vanderkam reveals the seven counterintuitive principles the most time-free people have adopted. She teaches mindset shifts to help you feel calm on the busiest days and tools to help you get more done without feeling overwhelmed. You'll meet people such as...

- ◆ An elementary school principal who figured out how to spend more time mentoring teachers, and less time supervising the cafeteria
- ◆ An executive who builds lots of meeting-free space into his calendar, despite managing teams across multiple continents
- ◆ A CEO who does focused work in a Waffle House early in the morning, so he can keep an open door and a relaxed mindset all day
- ◆ An artist who overcame a creative block, and reached new heights of productivity, by being more gentle with herself, rather than more demanding

The strategies in this book can help if your life feels out of control, but they can also help if you want to take your career, your relationships, and your personal happiness to the next level. Vanderkam has packed this book with insights from busy yet relaxed professionals, including "time makeovers" of people who are learning how to use these tools. *Off the Clock* can inspire the rest of us to create lives that are not only productive, but enjoyable in the moment.

Off the Clock: Feel Less Busy While Getting More Done Details

Date : Published May 29th 2018 by Portfolio

ISBN :


Author : Laura Vanderkam

Format : Kindle Edition 256 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Self Help, Productivity, Business, Personal Development



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L.A. Starks says

This is an excellent book--especially for anyone who read the novel "I Don't Know How She Does It" hoping for an answer: Vanderkam, with a career and four kids under the age of ten, provides more answers in this sequel to her first book, "I Know How She Does It." Readers who are 24/7 parents of young children or who have other family responsibilities at that level of full-time intensity will especially welcome these helpful, reassuring sets of suggestions about saving time and improving its quality.

BTW, Amazon should welcome the mention in this book of Kindle. And fellow Goodreaders will appreciate what Vanderkam has to say about reading reviews to find good books.

Stephanie says

This book gave me so much to think & talk about, and I even went back and re-listened to the chapter on relationships after I was done. Her stuff about the Anticipating/experiencing/memory self (and not letting the lazy or stressed “experiencing self” overrule the other two) especially hit home for me.

Beth Bender says

This isn't a bad book by any means and I basically agree with what Vanderkam is trying to say with this and her other books.

However,

The main fault with this book, her writing in general, and most books about time management that are based on what "successful" people do with their time is that the assumption of privilege. They assume a basic level of control over one's work schedule and a level of economic affluence that affords significant amounts of paid childcare and household help. Many working parents, both men and women, simply do not have the resources of control of their work situation that Vanderkam and the people she interviews possess. While I do not criticize Vanderkam for her level of privilege, especially since I'm a semi-upper middle class white female with a flexible job and ample financial resources, the fault is that she fails to acknowledge this privilege and how it impacts her world view and writing. I wouldn't expect her to be able to write from the perspective of those who are less fortunate in their financial and career status but I would like a bit more understanding of how others may have different circumstances.

Audrey Monke says

I've been obsessively telling everyone about this quick read. If you, like me, feel a bit “at war” with time,

feeling there's "never enough" and you "don't have time to relax," then you'll benefit from Vanderkam's wisdom, too. The book, true to its title, offers realistic ways to both feel less busy and get more done. More importantly, Vanderkam reminds us to focus on making the most of the moments and time we do have and always remember that "people are a good use of time."

Katherine Lewis says

It's no exaggeration to say that Laura Vanderkam's writing has changed my life. Her earlier books forced me to confront my own part in procrastination, avoiding hard tasks and making excuses like "I don't have the time." This book - Off the Clock - crystalizes all her earlier writing into an easy-to-follow (though sometimes counterintuitive) set of principles for making the most of your time. The author is a busy journalist, speaker, wife and mother of four, so I suppose it makes sense that she's figured out the secret to feeling less busy while getting more done -- as the subtitle of this book says. If you only buy one productivity or time management book this year, make it Off the Clock. Highly recommended!

Magistra says

What a helpful book! I've read it slowly so I could think about it as I read. Laura Vanderkam's wisdom about time—how to think about it and how to spend it—will be a life-changer. I'm already planning how to make little changes that will help me to be more intentional and linger in the important moments.

Gina says

Although the approach was much different, this book has much in common with The ONE Thing. Keller's book explained the idea behind the ONE Thing and detailed how it might be implemented. Off the Clock used stories, examples, and research data to make suggestions about how and what to prioritize. Together, the books have provided a lot to think about and, hopefully, act upon.

Sally Ewan says

I tried to read her book about 168 hours in a week, but got frustrated with the time tracking thing. (I'm already obsessive enough without filling in a grid of everything I do.)

But this book had some nice points to ponder, and so I will do that as I go about my life. Thinking about the people in my life and how to reach out to them....not in a networking kind of way, but in a caring way. I'm not looking to achieve success through relationships, but within them. I want to encourage others because I so appreciate it myself.

On my run yesterday morning, I thought about how the author encouraged being in the moment and saving the memory for later enjoyment. The sun, the birds, the path, the sky—all of it went into my mind and heart for future savoring.

And I will also think about what I'm putting into my life for enjoyment. If I take a break from work, maybe I'll go play the piano for a while.

Of course, it's too late to be a good example for my kids.....they've seen me doggedly pursuing productivity for all of their lives. But I can slow down and enjoy things more now. I can be a good example for my granddaughter! :)

Molly says

An excellent little book that gave me a lot to think about with respect to my "off the clock" time. I will be purchasing this so that I can refer to it from time to time. We can't be hard on ourselves about our "off the clock" time and I am glad that the author acknowledges this. It's okay to take relaxation time and do nothing. It's not selfish. Life is about making conscious choices about how we want to spend our limited time on earth.

Kelly says

While Vanderkam's discussions center around time and time management, the biggest takeaways in this book aren't about time management: they're about effective energy management. As someone who chooses energy management over time management -- this works for me.

We all have more time than we think, and being "busy" isn't a sign of importance. It's not an award to indicate a level of powerful work. If we looked at our days in thirty minute time chunks, we'd see the holes where "busy" doesn't exist, and it would be far more apparent than we think it is. Of course -- and this is acknowledged -- being able to have the time and luxury to think about time and leisure and work is itself a privilege.

There are seven big tips in this book:

1. Tend your garden
2. Make life memorable
3. Don't fill time
4. Linger
5. Invest in your happiness
6. Let it go
7. People are a good use of time.

They're pretty self-explanatory, but I find "tend to your garden" to be a great one, as well as "don't fill your time," and "let it go." Nothing has to be perfect, especially if perfect is the enemy of doing the thing. Filling your time to look important just steals energy from time you have to pursue your passions. And of course, tending your garden is how you continually prioritize and reprioritize. Vanderkam suggests spending Friday afternoons making your to-do for the upcoming week, setting intentions in the categories of "personal," "career," and "relationships." I appreciate the distinction here, too, between goals (things that can absolutely bog us down and make us forget that the process itself is often worthy of the pursuit) and intentions. If you

write those intentions down -- just a couple in each section -- with the seven tips in mind, it's easy to see where you can manage the energy and find the time.

I really appreciated, too, the advice she gave to a woman struggling to create art while also living her life. Vanderkam suggests remembering that your energy and time are better spent accepting that life happens and work takes a backseat than beating yourself up about the few hours you couldn't put in. You will make them up, whether you intentionally recognize you do or not.

There's a reference here to *The Four Tendencies: The Indispensable Personality Profiles That Reveal How to Make Your Life Better* and it's hard not to see that Vanderkam's book is a nice companion to it. Less of the framework and more in terms of how any tendency can work on time/energy challenges they come across.

Lori says

So many of the ideas in this book are things we already know we should or could be doing, but I needed the extra encouragement to implement them.

One of the big "take aways" for me is to create memorable experiences, not necessarily momentous ones. So many of my evenings seem to be frittered away without a plan. Now I am trying to be more intentional about how I spend my after dinner time. I have loved the long walks I am taking with my husband. These evenings are much more memorable than scrolling through Instagram or watching a TV show together.

I also appreciate Laura Vanderkam's final thought:

"All time passes. But some moments transcend the ceaseless ticking. We simply need to see them, and then in time, we see more."

Sarah says

Vanderkam on building in quality to the time you create by tracking your time. I'm an LVk fangirl and I liked it. It wasn't life-changing (like at least one of her other books has been for me) but it was good. It could probably have fit on an index card, but I get that she needed to make it a book. Because I read her blog, and get her newsletter, and listen to her podcast, and whatnot, there wasn't much new, but that's not her fault! I need to revisit it at a slightly less chaotic time (though presumably she would say this time would be less chaotic if I implemented the precepts..) to dig a bit deeper.

David Pulliam says

Just read the work book at the end or read some of her blog posts. There is a lot of filler with stories and platitudes about time management. Big takeaways:

1. Track all your time
 2. So memorable things
 3. Prioritize people
-

Janssen says

I didn't feel like this was as readable as some of her books, but I LOVED it. So thoughtful and I was talking and thinking about it non-stop.

Rachel (TheShadesofOrange) says

3.0 Stars

There were some good nuggets in this little book, but it felt too unstructured and oversimplified to offer meaningful time management strategies that I can utilize. I personally recommend the author's first book, 168 Hours, which I felt provided more practical advice for work life balance.
