

Chapter 18

The Life's Purpose Game (LPG)

Use to best manage your time so that you maximize synergy, goal attainment, wellness, and purpose in life.

It's your life. Your life's work defines and takes your time. It's what you do. Your mission and goals can define how you spend almost every waking minute of every day of your life. If you don't choose to, life will come anyway, and you may have regrets. You could continue to be accountable in your roles as an excellent parent, an employee, a student, a credentialed professional, a teacher, a boss, or a community leader. You could be rich or famous, with excellent health and fitness. You could be all of these things and successfully juggle many responsibilities over your entire lifetime.

We all have the same amount of time—a measly 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The average American (regardless of gender or employment) spends an average of 9.33 hours doing personal-care activities, including sleeping; 1.13 hours eating and drinking; and 0.28 hours engaging in exercise or other sports-related recreation each day.⁷⁷ We know that 0.28 hours (less than seventeen minutes per day) of physical activity is woefully insufficient and should be at least 1 hour per day (including all walking). This means that on average, with adequate time for exercise, we should be spending close to 12 hours a day engaging in personal self-care. Alternatively, it means we have only 12 hours a day to complete all our occupational and professional obligations (including commuting) and social obligations (that don't involve our loved ones).

Most of us struggle to manage our time well. Some prioritize roles that provide greater financial short-term benefits or that lead to academic accomplishments. Others prioritize (whether they realize it or not) their short-term desires. Most of us struggle to fulfill both our needs and our wants. Yet there are many “under the radar” responsibilities that frequently lead to a major crisis if we don't proactively attend to them (e.g., when the toilet overflows, a check bounces, a child flunks a test, or a relative gets cancer). No matter what your priorities are, to be effective, you have to manage your time well.

Generic Rules for the Life's Purpose Game

You win the Life's Purpose if you can accomplish all your goals (relating to self-care / personal spiritual well-being, socioemotional issues [relationships] and purpose [occupation]) in an average twenty-four hours a day (providing twelve hours a day for self-care, sleep, and exercise). Of course, you won't really accomplish this by just playing the game; you'll need to successfully define your goals and accomplish them. Like any game, every time you play will be different; life continues to evolve and throw us unexpected curve balls. The results of this game, are expected to be different a year from now, as your priorities and situation will have changed. However, the generic rules of this game do not change.

- ◇ You won't win if you're not honest. Not being 100 percent truthful with yourself and your loved ones just leads to frustration and wasted time.
- ◇ You must consider your partner or partners. If you are married or made a commitment to live with others, unless expressly communicated otherwise, you are expected to complete your life in harmony with your partner or partners. This means you are not playing the game of Life's Purpose alone; you cannot determine your goals without consideration of your key loved ones. Be open-minded enough to consider change and to accept that there may be a better way. Ideally, couples should complete this game first independently, consider their own life's purpose in tandem, and then work together to build on each other's strengths and synergize for optimal outcomes.

⁷⁷ “American Time Use Survey—2014 Results,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, June 24, 2015, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/atus.pdf>. Statistics reported were taken from table 2 (totals for the civilian population).

- ◇ It's not a competition. You are not competing with or comparing yourself to anyone else. No one else can determine your goals, your tradeoffs, and what it takes for you to "win" the game.
- ◇ Roles with legal obligations have high priority. Parents, managers, and some occupational roles come with legal obligations that require you to meet the "letter of the law" (e.g., getting your child to school), but it is in your best interest to do them well. These roles, as professional codes of ethics, must be prioritized.
- ◇ Goal planning must be integrated in order to be successful. Part 3, "The Journey," focuses on integrated goal setting; don't try to fix things yet!

Key Definitions

- "Full-time" is considered spending at least forty hours a week at an occupation.
- Most of us are expected to juggle multiple roles at any one time. A "juggler" is defined as anyone who has more than fifty hours of occupational work per week (an average of 7.14 hours a day; or 8 hours per day on weekdays and 10 hours a day on weekends). This does *not* consider commute time, which is labeled as a separate category.
- For the purpose of this exercise, "financial security" is defined as "having enough cash to adequately live for six months without having to work."

What to expect

The first activity considers a wide range of unpaid responsibilities that fall under the generic heading of "home care." The second activity builds upon the first by clarifying your key roles and the average time per week it truly takes to do each role well. Both of these activities take about ten minutes to complete. They'll provide you with a ballpark understanding of how much time you spend on professional, home, and social responsibilities, which can then be used to determine how much time you have left to spend on other activities that are important to your personal well-being and other goals. A calculator will help with sums and averages. The third activity is an excellent investment in time but may take you and a loved one an hour to complete. It is easiest to complete using the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which is available at www.wellnesscompass.LifePurposeTimeManagement.xls. I encourage you to do the activities in pencil, as you may need to change your answer once you do the sums.⁷⁸ If you need another copy of any part of this game, you can always download it from the Wellness Compass Travel Guide website.

If you decide to play the game of Life's Purpose along with your partner or partners, you may find that each of you defines certain categories slightly differently. That's okay, as long as each person is honest and consistent, and the totals add to 24 hours a day and 168 hours a week. How you classify things differently—particularly within the home-care responsibilities, exercise, and the things you multitask⁷⁹ on—may lead to eye-opening discoveries. If you do a lot of multitasking, you'll have to clarify and consistently apply your strategy so you don't double- or triple-count times. If, like me, you frequently cook, eat, and clean up while watching the news and doing laundry, you may count the entire time as food preparation (not relaxation and not self-care for eating) or break the time up.

⁷⁸ Expect that you may not be able to account for everything you do correctly the first time! That's actually one of key benefits of this activity. You'll approximate what you are currently doing it, be surprised or frustrated, with something and then want to adjust the numbers so that you can get the sleep you need or make time to exercise, or otherwise accomplish your goals and life purpose.

⁷⁹ For the purpose of this activity, multi-tasking is defined as accomplishing two or more key activities at the same time.

Activity 18.1: LPG Home-Care Obligations Per Week

Review the activities in each category below. Check each activity that needs to occur in your life. Circle the diamond if you are *not* the primary person who does it, and list the name of the person who does it. Next to each category, enter the *average* number of hours per week you need to spend on these obligations to do them well.

Planning and financial: ____ hrs

- ◇ banking; bill payments; asset management
- ◇ financial management budgeting, record keeping, tax preparation
- ◇ planning for gifts, travel, etc.

Medical care (for self or others): _____ hrs

- ◇ appointments and medicine
- ◇ illness or injury care

Internal home organization and cleaning: _____ hrs

- ◇ tidying, organization, and management
- ◇ routine cleaning
- ◇ recycling and taking the garbage out
- ◇ deep cleaning; purges in home
- ◇ other in home

External home care: ____ hrs

- ◇ ongoing yard care (e.g., watering)
- ◇ garage organization
- ◇ windows
- ◇ yard maintenance: mowing, weeding
- ◇ home repair

Shopping, food, and laundry: ____ hrs

- ◇ purchase and storage of necessities
- ◇ food planning and preparation
- ◇ food cleanup and storage
- ◇ laundry: washing, drying, folding, storing, dry cleaning

Parenting and key relations: ____ hrs

- ◇ necessary communications
- ◇ daily dependent care, including homework
- ◇ driving dependents; family travel
- ◇ coaching; activity management
- ◇ time spent with family members or other people in your circle of commitment
- ◇

Auto care (for all vehicles): ____ hrs

◇

Pet care: ____ hrs

◇

Other: _____ : ____ hrs

Average home-care hours per week ____

Average home-care hour per day ____ (weekly hours / 7)

Activity 18.2: LPG—Occupational Roles: What Type of Juggler Are You?

How many hours do you spend in various occupational roles to do them well?

Part 1: Defining time spent in each role category

Read the following list of roles. Check each role that you currently play. After you've completed the entire list, sum up how many hours you put into each role category. If a category doesn't apply, just skip it. The number of hours for the home manager roles must align with the results of activity 18.1.

Home-care obligations: average hours per week _____ average per day _____
____ part-time homemaker/parent/caregiver /driver
____ full-time homemaker/parent/caregiver (at least forty hours of care for others)

Paid employment: average hours per week _____ average per day _____
____ part-time employee
____ full-time employee (forty or more hours; possibly paid overtime)
____ manager or exempt worker (not paid for overtime) or self-employed

Learner hours: average hours per week _____ average per day _____
____ lifelong learner: any unpaid learning less than forty hours a week.
____ full-time student: fifteen credits or more of unpaid learning per semester (or equivalent)

Commute time (to and from work): average hours per week _____ average per day _____

Volunteer/other: average hours per week _____ average per day _____
____ community volunteer (unpaid responsible work)
____ unpaid asset manager
____ any other role : _____

Part 2: What type of juggler are you?

Do the simple math to get an occupational average per week and per day and then determine your juggler status.

- 1) Divide average hours per week by seven to get an average daily number. Round this number to either a whole number or 0.25, 0.50, or 0.75.
- 2) Sum the time spent across each role to determine your total occupational hours a week. Write this number below.
- 3) Divide this number by seven to get your average occupational hours per day. List this number below. Note that this is for the entire week—not just the work week.
- 4) Use this information to define your juggler status below.

Average occupational hours per week _____ **Average occupational hours per day** _____

Juggler status

- ____ not a juggler (any combination of the above equivalent to 19 hours or less)
____ part-time juggler (any combination of the above from twenty to forty-nine hours)
____ full-time juggler (any combination of the above fifty to seventy hours without excessive stress)
____ juggler at risk (more than seventy combined occupational hours a week)

Activity 18.3: LPG—Weekly Time Estimates

Purpose: Your goal is to estimate, on average, how much time you spend in a twenty-four hour period and over the 168 hours in a week. For simplicity, round all numbers to either 0, 0.25, 0.5, or 0.75 to correlate to an hour or fifteen, thirty, or forty-five minutes.

Name _____

Unduplicated daily and weekly time estimates as of _____ / _____ / 20 _____

Roles	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Total Week	Daily Ave	Option 2	Option 3
Occupational											
Home Care											
Paid											
Learner											
Commute											
Volunteer											
Personal											
Sleep											
Self-Care											
Exercise											
Relaxation											
Other											
Totals	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	168	24	168	168

Occupational Time: Start by entering the average time per week from the four occupational categories completed in activity 18.2 in the column labeled “Total Week.” Next, based on what you did in the last week, estimate your time spent from Monday to Friday, or the days you have designated as workdays for each of the occupational activities, and then adjust for weekends.

Personal Time: Sequentially, add in time spent in personal and other activities.

- Sleep includes all time spent lying down with eyes closed or attempting to sleep. Include naps.
- Self-care includes all time spent eating; cleaning yourself; dressing and undressing; taking care of your hair, teeth, and makeup; shaving; taking medicine; praying; meditating; and all the time you spend at appointments that help you take care of yourself. If you must chat or communicate via social media in support of a medical condition, then add up to one hour a day; otherwise, categorize social time as relaxation.
- Exercise includes all preparation for exercise (getting clothes ready, waiting for class, time spent actively exercising, and breaks in between, and all stretching) but excludes transportation time. Also include all daily walking (but not standing) that has not overlapped with another category.

- Relaxation includes time spent in communication that is not purposely for your home care or your self-care, such as time spent watching TV, playing games, reading, or not doing anything but relaxing.

Other: Add in other time only if you feel something important that you do regularly is missing.

Balancing Total and Validity Checking

Take your time in estimating daily and weekly totals. Double-check by making sure all daily totals are equivalent to 24 hours and the weekly total is 168 hours. If you can't make it work, don't get too frustrated; just fudge it and use the other role category—it's only a ballpark estimate anyway! Once you estimate your totals per week, determine your daily averages.

Validity Checks

1. Do you need to check with your partner to validate or compare? If so, consider doing it now.
2. Did any of the time estimates in activities 18.1 and 18.2 change? If so, consider updating them so they align with the results of 18.3 if you haven't already.

Activity 18.4: Lessons Learned from the Life's Purpose Game

Use to document what you've learned what you could do different to improve your time management.

Suggestion. *Individuals with a significant other are encouraged to first complete this activity independently, then share individuals result, then discuss individuals results to build understanding and consensus on change changes.. Discussion could include previously written mission statements, goals, commitments, and the like.*

Financial stability considerations: Do you and your partner currently have sufficient financial stability? Explain why or why not? How are your current paid or unpaid positions and spending affecting your financial stability?

How many hours a week do you spend multitasking? _____ hrs

How is this level of multitasking affecting you and your loved ones, and how does it support your goals?

Professional/occupational role considerations: Is your time spent in occupational activities a reflection of your priorities (goals or mission)? How is your juggler status working for you? What would be better and still allow you to meet basic financial obligations?

Personal time: How is your current balance of time affecting your health and well-being? What's going well? What should change? Why?

Future considerations: What will likely be different in one year, or in five years, that should be considered now so you can be proactive or prevent potential future problems?

Next steps: