Module 1
The Big Picture: How to Figure Out What's Really Important and Ditch the Rest

Hello everyone, and welcome. I am so excited to have you here for this course! For me personally, figuring out how to organize and manage my time has made such a difference in my life. I'm just so excited to be able to share some of what I've learned with all of you.

We're starting now with Module 1, The Big Picture: How to figure out what's really important in your life and how to ditch the rest. The reason I want to do this is, just like Snoopy here, we want to experience joy and satisfaction in our lives. The real secret of time management, and this isn't so much the secret of how to do it, this is the secret of why it is important.

Why time management is important is because time is the one thing all of us have the same amount of. We all have a finite amount of it.

If we live to be 120 years old, there's never going to be enough to do everything we want to do in this world. Figuring out what's most important to you and how to organize things in a way that enables you to get those things done. That enables you to live your fullest, richest life and do the most with your time.

It might not be the priority your child would have, or your neighbor, or your parents. Knowing what's important to *you* and figuring out how to get those things done, that's the real secret of living a meaningful rich life. That's why time management is so, so important.

First things first. In order to figure out how best to use our time, we need to figure out what we really want from our time in our lives. I break this down into four categories – personal, professional, physical, and spiritual. In each of those categories, it's important to know what would you really like, what are your dreams.

Just some examples, personal might be a romantic relationship. It might be I'd like to spend more time with my children. It might be something that might cross a few categories, like I've always wanted to run a marathon. That could be personal and physical. Some of these are going to be crossovers.

Professional, obviously, is something having to do with your profession – like your job. Physical, again, could be a goal of something fitness-related. It could even be something as simple as I'd really like to figure out how to sleep better at night. I would like to get rid of these headaches I have at the end of every day or every week.

Spiritual doesn't necessarily mean organized religion. It certainly could if that's important to you. It could also just mean something that helps you get more in tune with yourself in the world and your place in it. It might mean meditation. It might mean I'd like to just take more long walks and think about things.

Right now we're not worrying about the "Gosh, I don't know how I would ever find time to do or have XYZ." We're not worried about that right this second. We're just looking at if you could

do and have anything in these categories, what would they be? What do you really want out of your life? Go ahead and figure some stuff out and write them down. This is very, very important.

Things don't actually have to be written down in hard copy. You can put them on your computer, you can put them on your old-school typewriter if you have one, you can write them in crayon in the back of a shopping list, but the important thing is that you put them down in tangible form.

Go ahead and stop the recording. I know I'm going to give you work right away, but this is important to the other stuff. Do this and then pick back up when you've done it.

Just to check here, stop! Have you done your work? Don't go on with the course. You're not going to really know how to organize the rest of everything else until you've done these steps. Write down your goals – personal, professional, physical, spiritual. Don't get hung up if something seems not to fit the categories or you're not sure where it goes. If it's important to you, write it down.

Next step. We've got our big goals, we know what we really, really want. And we going to put those aside just for a moment and look at...OK, well, where is my time going now? How am I spending this 24 hours a day that I have? We're not going to look at work time just yet, we will get to that but right now at the outset, we're going to assume that your work time is pretty much circumscribed from a certain time in the morning to a certain time in the afternoon or evening.

Again, we'll get to your work time and your work tasks, but right now we're just looking at everything else that brackets that. Here are some ideas. Obviously some of it's different for everyone but there's some things most of us do, some are all the time. Commuting, getting to and from work.

Exercise, how much time are you spending on that? Not just on the treadmill, but in terms of getting to the gym, changing your clothes, showering, doing your hair afterwards, that type of thing.

We all need to eat! How much time are you spending preparing meals? Going food shopping, food-related stuff.

How much sleep are you getting? You can even map sleep as, "I go to bed and I read for an hour." That would fall into either leisure time or sleep. Just get it all down so you know how you're spending that time.

Basic things like the morning rush, how much time do you spend in the shower, getting kids' lunches ready and so forth. You can see the rest of the list, basic stuff. How much time are you on the phone with a friend? Volunteer activities.

Again, not looking at work time right now, how much time are you online either emailing, shopping, browsing, just kind of surfing the Web, looking at people online, Facebook. We all spend probably more time on Facebook than we think we do!

You don't need to break this down a minute by minute. Some people advise that you do that. I personally don't because I think that can get too intimidating and reminds me of my days back when I was an attorney, and you had to bill every single hour of the workday into six-minute billable increments. It was horrible. I don't want you to lose this in the details, so really just look in a big picture way.

Track through a week or so. A typical week—don't start this the week you're on vacation, Christmas week, anything like that. Just on an average week, average day, where is your time going? Keep a notepad by your side, write it down. At the end of the week, you'll have a pretty good sense of what your non-work time, where that is all going.

Any surprises? There probably will be. Some might be good. You might think, "Gee, I actually spend more time..." Let's say you like to read. "I actually find I do have more time to get that book in every day than I would have expected I do. I guess I'm able to make time for that."

Again, you may find Facebook is this huge time suck for you. You had no idea. "My gosh, I spend close to an hour and a half everyday on Facebook. I can't believe it!" The reason we do the time tracking is not to beat ourselves up or to pass judgment, it's just so you know, where is this time going? As Peter Drucker, a famous management consultant, said, "What gets measured gets managed."

It's hard to manage your time if you don't know where it's going. It's like if you're trying to eat less, it's hard to lose weight and do that if you don't have any idea how much you're eating now. Again, no judgment. This is not to beat yourself up. It's just to look at this with awareness, but not judgment. Where you are now is your starting point, and we're going to go from there.

The first step of all of that time you just looked at and all these activities you do, what can be eliminated? Brian Tracy (we'll talk about one of his books a little later in the course) says, "The very worst use of time is to do something extremely well that need not be done at all." This is very true.

I know this, certainly, isn't needed, but maybe you spend a lot of time every week folding clothes. Your husband's, yours, your spouse's, whoever's. Maybe you spend a lot of time, I don't know, polishing your grandmother's silver, even though you really don't care if it's tarnished or not. These are wacky examples, but I'm sure there's something in your life you think, "The world would carry on."

Maybe it's dusting. Maybe you think, "I can live with a certain amount of dust in my life, in my house, not going to bother me."

Obviously, what can be eliminated? This varies from person to person. Look at your time breakdown and see, is there anything in there that, it's not even that I need to pass it off on

someone else or figure out how to do it better or faster, I'm just going to stop doing this. This can be hard, especially if it's something you might think is worthy for some reason.

Probably, in your life, in everyone's life, there's stuff we do that we really don't need to be doing it at all. Here's some more ideas. Could you cut back on your TV time? Maybe you're getting the snooze sleep that's not really making you feel rested, but it's 20 minutes you could be doing something else with in the morning. Maybe there's a lot of volunteer stuff you do. You don't need to do all of it, maybe.

We'll talk more later about how to decide, but could you possibly eliminate one of these meetings? Could you maybe pack a lunch, if you're not already doing that? Not so much for money savings, which it might be, but just saves me time if I don't have to run out in the middle of the day to go grab something to eat. Cancel a few magazine subscriptions.

This will save you a little bit of money, but really it's the time spent either reading these magazines, because, "Oh, I get them, I feel I should," or and this is important, the time you might feel guilty looking at this pile of magazines you really don't want to read, but, "I should do that." What could possibly be eliminated?

Consider alternatives. Something even like cooking dinner every night. Obviously you need to eat, but maybe you don't need to cook every night. There are programs online where you cook once a month, which sounds crazy to me, I've never tried those. Maybe you could work out a swap with a neighbor.

You each cook a big old batch and swap a few meals every week. That's two nights a week you don't have to cook at all.

Get creative. Maybe it's something that you can eliminate off your plate and still get the end result, somehow, in a satisfactory way. It's important not to eliminate important sources of pleasure. What I mean by this is, for some of us, I'm using Facebook as an example. Real big time suck. You can get lost for hours in there.

Maybe none of us needs to spend that much time there. If you want to, that's fine, but let's say one of your very favorite things to do is, you wake up, you make your coffee, sit down on your computer and you love popping into Facebook and seeing what everybody is up to. It's not that you waste time this way, it's not that you're avoiding other things, you really enjoy this.

Don't cut that out. Don't cut that out of your life.

There are things we all do and think, "I shouldn't enjoy this so much, but I do." If it's not hurting anyone, and if it's something you can afford, it's not putting your family in this financial straits, don't stop. Again, there is no judgment here. If you really derive a lot of pleasure out of something, keep that thing in your life.

You might decide to spend less time on it. You might decide your current time allotment is just right, but it's important, when we're going through our current list of activities, don't get rid of the stuff that really brings you joy.

Finally, just a little note here, it's very important to remember that deciding not do something anymore is not a reflection of that activity's inherent value. What I mean by this, is let's say you spend every Saturday morning volunteering at your local ASPCA. You love animals, you just want to do everything you can for them.

Let's say, hypothetically, you spend three hours every Saturday morning there. That is a great thing, all of us would agree. But in the context of your big goals, and where you want your life to go, maybe you need those three hours for something else.

Deciding to stop volunteering at the ASPCA doesn't mean it's not a good thing. It just means that maybe to get to where you want, goal-wise, this isn't something you have time for in your life at the current level. Possibly you could decide to volunteer just once a month. Or drop it down to a single hour every Saturday morning instead of three.

You might decide to just start writing the nice people of the ASPCA a check every month instead. Mail it off, and you're still supporting them, but you're not supporting them in the same way with that same big chunk of time.

There's going to be stuff that is worthwhile, good things that you're going to decide, "This really doesn't fit in my life anymore in this current context," and that's OK.

Don't beat yourself up. It doesn't mean you're a bad person if you decide to stop doing something. Even something, really a good thing, it just means it's not right for you right now.

Next category, what can be delegated? This is stuff that has to get done, but not necessarily by you, either always or ever. An example, the cooking. Maybe you have an 11-year-old child who is excited to try things out in the kitchen. Assuming they can do it safely, let them have at dinner one night a week. There's no harm in that.

You might get some burned food, you might get some interesting combinations, but how about it? That frees up some time for you and gives your kid a chance to mess around in the kitchen.

Cleaning, you might find children are great for delegating tasks like these. It might be worth it to you if you find a reasonable price for a local cleaning service. That frees up X number of hours for you every week to do something else with.

Laundry can be delegated. You might send it out. You might decide to have your spouse take over some of the laundry tasks. Car pooling/kid hauling. That's a good one. You can work with your neighbors instead of both of us going to school and back every single day. We'll alternate weeks, alternate days.

Some of these things are things that have to get done somehow in some fashion. Grocery shopping, you need groceries. You can do something like Peapod. Maybe your local store offers a grocery delivery service. You got to get the food in the house somehow, but it's not always a question of you going out and doing it.

Just think what can be delegated. It's important to remember that you personally, me personally, none of us can do it all, all by ourselves. A lot of people, especially folks like you all in the childcare industry, are such caring, giving people, and you want to give so much of yourself in everything you do—and that is a wonderful thing.

The thing is, we all have a finite amount of time, of energy, of motivation. We can't do it all; we simply can't. You need to carve out time for your most important priorities and tasks.

It's important to remember there are some things *only you* can do. I will use an example, putting my kids to bed at night. For my husband and me, somebody else can do it (if we have a baby sitter, whether she or he is the one doing it that night), but most nights that is special time for our family.

Having my neighbor put my child to bed at night is not going to be the same experience for either of them. These are things that it's what you personally bring to that situation. A lot of things at work are like that. But surprisingly in life, there aren't all that many.

The things you should be doing yourself—just you—are really the things, as I mentioned, that bring you a great deal of joy. Things that really require your specific talents – things that require your specific combination of experiences.

It's very easy to say, "Well, gee, if my, my nine-year-old does laundry, it's not going to be as good as if I do it." That may be. In the big scheme of things, that's really OK, if that means you have an extra hour a week to write that novel you're wanting to write, or to work on finding a really great teacher for your program.

Always be thinking, this is an ego thing. For all of us, I can do it better. That may be true. It doesn't mean you necessarily should still be doing it.

This is the end of this module, and after this, we're going on to talk about how we actually get everything in place. Stay tuned.