

At Your Best

Tags: [#human-relations](#) [#productivity](#)

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Dialogue

Story about his grandmother.

The people who want your time are rarely the people who should have your time. And the people who should get most of your premium time rarely ask you for it.

What's the implication of that for leaders?

So many leaders have nothing left to give because they've given it all away to people who, honestly, weren't helped by the interaction.

How do you know when you're not helping?

This is such a delicate balance from a leadership standpoint. Open door policy, etc.

People have far better manners than technology does.

Using Dunbar numbers as your digital filter.

The depth of the relationship should determine the depth and speed of your response.

How do you handle access - and limiting it or not?

How is that different than it was 15 years ago?

You're a recovering people pleaser. How do you limit that tendency when it's not going to benefit you that much -- or the other party.

You've gotten the attention of the right people. What's worked for you to do that?

What have you changed your mind on?

Reserve

First Break All the Rules

Planning in advance -- I need to jump onto else.

Love is something more stern and splendid than mere kindness. -C.S. Lewis

Quotes

Highlight [page 16]: So, this isn't a burnout book. It is, instead, a stay-out-of burnout book.

Highlight [page 65]: So, the first step to focusing your time is to start telling the truth about time. Stop saying you don't have the time. Start admitting you didn't make the time.

Highlight [page 70]: Balanced people don't change the world. Passionate people do.

Highlight [page 75]: Daniel Pink has done a fantastic study of how people perform at different times of the day in his book *When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing*. According to Pink, about 14 percent of people are morning people, 21 percent are night owls, and 65 percent of us are somewhere in the middle. While knowing whether you're a morning person or night owl can help, what if leveraging your time could result in far more productivity?

Highlight [page 163]: My grandmother appreciated those conversations, but not nearly as much as Nancy seemed to. Grandma was ready for a fifteen-minute chat. Nancy, it seems, was ready for endless conversation every day. As the phone rang, I'd hear my grandmother say, "It's ten o'clock. That must be Nancy," and pick up the phone. They'd talk about a few things, but as is the case when you talk every day, there wasn't much news. Then I'd watch Grandma try to unsnare herself from the conversation.

Highlight [page 166]: Here's a paradox you might recognize: The people who want your time are rarely the people who should have your time. And the people who should get most of your premium time rarely ask you for it. Keep that dynamic going, and the people who most drain you will be the people you spend most of your time with. And the people who most energize you? Yup, you'll spend the least amount of time with them. Think about it. At work, your best team members, top salespeople, best managers, top donors, and best volunteers rarely if ever ask for your time. In your personal life, the people who often suffer most from your misallocation of time are the people closest to you—your spouse, kids, best friends, parents, and other family members. Too often you'll ignore the people you care about most as you spend your time with people you care about less. If you recognize this dynamic (I do), then ask this question: Why don't I spend time with the people I most want to and need to spend time with?

Highlight [page 168]: It's not that you should have zero time for people with flat learning curves, but they shouldn't take up your prime time when neither you nor they see any results. And even if they could use coaching or assistance, if your influence isn't helping them, maybe you're not the one to assist them. I've found more than a few times that the best thing I can do when I hit a flat-learning-curve dynamic in relationships is refer them to other people. It's not just better for me, but it's better for

them. in relationships is refer them to other people. It's not just better for me, but it's better for them.

Highlight [page 169]: The point here is not that we should avoid these people at all costs. Not at all. In fact, I think we should make room for some of them in our lives (some, after all, might be family). Everyone needs a hand, and in some seasons I've been the draining person who needed people to build into me. (On my bad days, I'm sure I'm probably still draining to some people around me.) Social workers, counselors, health-care workers, mental health workers, pastors, and in varying degrees, first responders deal with needy people. These are all tremendous professions that provide vital services to people in need. In imbalanced relationships, you give; they receive. While that's appropriate in many cases, a steady diet of giving leaves you depleted. It just becomes exhausting for you to have a lot of draining people in your life, and when they occupy your Green Zone regularly, you'll struggle to get anything done (as will they).

Highlight [page 170]: I meet so many leaders who have nothing left to give because they've given it all away to people who, honestly, weren't helped by the interaction.

Highlight [page 171]: When I first understood that I would naturally spend most of my time with the people I least needed to and not nearly enough time with the people I most needed to, I experienced a breakthrough moment both in my life and in my leadership. Just because people wanted to meet with me didn't mean I needed to meet with them.

Highlight [page 173]: Starting at the center circle, Dunbar suggested that you and I are hardwired for three to five true friendships—intimate relationships with people whom you have the habit of connecting with at least once a week. You don't even need to use your other hand to count the number of intimate friendships a human can have. The next circle is the twelve to fifteen people he calls your "sympathy group"—friends you connect with at least once a month who share your values, interests, and often perspectives on life. "Curiously," he noted, "this is also the typical team size in most team sports, the number of members on a jury, the number of Apostles . . . and the list goes on." The total of twenty relationships between these first two circles is about all the people most humans can manage to truly know, said Dunbar.³ But wait . . . I know way more people than that, you're thinking. And you're right. You do "know" the names, bios, and perhaps the kids' names of a larger group. But Dunbar maxed that number out at 150. Not 300. Not 1,500. Not 1.5 million. Just 150.

Highlight [page 175]: When you give in to your desire to connect but don't think about design, you experience tension, because there's an implicit contract with many of the people we connect with on social. Every time you share your phone number, give out your email address, or hit Accept, Follow, or Friend, it's like you or hit Accept, Follow, or Friend, it's like you make an unstated commitment—you're available and accessible. All the people you're now connected with have the ability to message you, tag you, or otherwise access you anytime, anywhere. Do that more than 150 times (and I doubt

there's a single reader of this book who's under 150), and you blow your natural limit. No wonder social media makes you feel overwhelmed. And you and I aren't exactly Justin Bieber.

Highlight [page 176]: People have far better manners than technology does. Face to face, most people see the nuance of whether it's a good time to ask someone a question or call in a favor. Generally speaking, we respect where our friends are at and err on the side of restraint rather than interruption. one a question or call in a favor. Generally speaking, we respect where our friends are at and err on the side of restraint rather than interruption. Technology removes that nuance. Digital messages are always sent at the convenience of the sender, never at the convenience of the recipient. Digital proximity means anyone has access anytime, anywhere, which feels so overwhelming, especially when you're watching the sunset with the people you love most. Physical proximity has good manners that digital proximity hasn't learned.

Highlight [page 178]: I suggest using Dunbar's numbers as your digital filter. Identify the three to five in your inner circle and the twelve to fifteen in your support group. And while you likely don't need to name the wider 150, keep that concept in mind when you get a request, and ask yourself, Is this person someone I'm in real relationship with? Then respond accordingly. Get back to your three to five as quickly as you can, because they are your lifeblood. Go to their games. Grab dinner. Support their fundraisers. Hang out and watch the sun set. Reply to your next twelve to fifteen with a little less urgency, but treat them like they matter to you, because they do. The 150 are people you want to value and appreciate, but you don't need to give them the kind of immediate response you'd give to the innermost circles. And the rest of humanity? Well, be kind, but put up some boundaries. You literally weren't designed to handle that many people.

Highlight [page 179]: Decide how quickly you'll respond to and how often you'll reach out to your best friends, friends, and tribe. The principle is simple: stop treating everyone the same, because all relationships aren't the same. The depth of the relationship should determine the depth and speed of your response.

Highlight [page 199]: You don't need to tell Jason that the commitment is to yourself or your kids or your spouse. You simply have a commitment. thy people respect the boundaries you set. De Healthy people respect the boundaries you set. Despite your lingering apprehension, the vast majority of the time, people won't question what that commitment is. They'll simply say, "Oh, that's too bad." If they ask what you have going on, just tell them, "I have a commitment with my family that day." Or "I have some personal plans on Saturday." They'll get it. And respect it.

References