

CREATING YOUR  
**LIFE PLAN**  
with  
DONALD MILLER

# Thanks for downloading the *Creating Your Life Plan Workbook* and Online Course by Donald Miller.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- 1 To guide you in the creation of your life plan.
- 2 To bring clarity and focus to your life.
- 3 To help you organize and improve your relationships.
- 4 To help you have a new attitude toward challenges.
- 5 To help you experience a deep sense of meaning.
- 6 To lock the concepts in with a powerful follow-up program.
- 7 To help you change yourself and your community for the better.

# INTRODUCTION

## CREATING A LIFE OF MEANING



**READ**

THE INTRODUCTION



**WATCH**

THE INTRODUCTION VIDEO

The *Creating Your Life Plan* online course is designed to help you experience a life of meaning. And experiencing a life of meaning won't happen by accident.

Most people spend more time planning their vacation than they spend planning their lives, so it's no wonder so many people come to the end of their lives and experience regret. They realize, too late, they should have paid more attention to their dreams, taken more risks, spent more time investing in relationships, and less time focusing on their failures or tragedies.

The reality is we only get one story to live and if we don't plan it, we're much more likely to waste it.

And the stakes couldn't be higher.

Your family, friends, coworkers, teammates and neighbors are more affected by the way you live than you think. It's in relationship that we learn what really

matters in life. If we constantly worry about accumulating money so we can buy things from Bed Bath & Beyond, we're teaching the people around us what's worth worrying about, what's worth working for, and what we believe life is really about. Our children are literally learning from us what matters in life. And if we're living in reaction to the world around us rather than grabbing the wheel, we can only expect them to do the same thing.

And so the *Creating Your Life Plan* online course is an intervention. Our hope is to take back your life, to study what has been proven to give us a meaningful life, and then create a life plan that will ensure we live it.

## **WHY DOES MEANING MATTER?**

Without a sense of meaning in life, we distract ourselves with pleasure. Find me an addict and I'll find somebody who doesn't have a sense of meaning. Find me an employee who isn't productive and I'll show you somebody who doesn't think life is meaningful. Find me a father neglecting his children and I'll show you somebody who is likely trying to find meaning in a pursuit they will soon find empty.

When a person lives a life of meaning, they are more productive, more socially engaged, much more optimistic about life, less likely to get ensnared by conflicts, and have a stronger idea of who they are, what they want and what matters to them in life. In short, people who experience a deep sense of meaning are healthy.

# WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO EXPERIENCE A MEANINGFUL LIFE?

In the introduction video, Don will explain the philosophy of Dr. Viktor Frankl. Dr. Frankl was alive during the time of Sigmund Freud, and when Freud posited the greatest drive in man is the pursuit of pleasure, Frankl disagreed. Frankl argued that what man wanted wasn't pleasure, but a deep sense of meaning. And when a man couldn't find meaning, he numbed himself with pleasure.

Frankl's prescription for a sense of meaning was incredibly pragmatic. He said people could experience a deep sense of meaning in three ways:

- 1 Clear Roles, Goals and Ambitions:** What he meant by this was that a human being needs a reason to get out of bed in the morning. They need to know the world expects something from them and whatever that is needs to come from their heart. A person needs to feel useful and important and that importance needs to be tied to specific tasks that, perhaps, only they can accomplish. Are your roles, goals and ambitions clear? They will be soon.
- 2 Healthy Relationships:** Like it or not, we learn more from each other than we do from books, movies, television or any other form of media. The stories people around us are living affect us deeply. Frankl believed healthy relationships were critical to experiencing a life of meaning. How healthy are your relationships? How are people affecting you and how are you affecting them? We will spend ample time thinking about where your relationships are going.

3

**A Redemptive Perspective Toward Suffering and Challenges:** Every human being experiences suffering and challenges. Our attitude toward suffering, though, can redeem it and perhaps even allow us to see it as something beneficial. The temptation to play the victim is intense, but Frankl believed stopping to make a list of the many ways a hardship also serves as a blessing takes some of the sting out of our suffering. Suffering and challenges often require grieving, but we can also celebrate our uniquely human capacity to rise above those painful experiences, redeem them, and turn them into something beautiful. Are you playing the victim? Or do you have a healthy relationship toward suffering and challenges? We will talk much more about this in the module about redeeming our negative turns.

## WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM THIS ONLINE COURSE?

Once we plan our lives with meaning in mind, we can expect serious changes.

**First**, when we identify our roles, goals and ambitions, we can expect more clarity. You'll be amazed at how much stress you experience in life simply because you're confused about who you are and what you're supposed to be doing.

**Second**, you can expect changes in your relationships. You might even have to let go of some of the relationships you're in that aren't healthy. Once you know who you need to invest more time in and who you need to back away from, your social life will feel less like a junk drawer and more like a healthy atom.

**Third**, you can expect to let go of the hardships and pain that has been plaguing you. Our process will allow you to healthily grieve the pain you've experienced, while also turning that pain into the foundational experiences you need to become an impactful, empathetic person. Our hope is to help you take the journey from helpless victim to wounded healer.

## HOW DOES THE COURSE WORK?

Simply read the introduction to each module, watch the video, then fill out the life plan module associated with each video. Your username and password will not expire, so you can take the course at your own leisure. After you've finished all the modules, your life plan is complete. Once it's complete, you can edit it for the rest of your life. You can then use your *Storyline Productivity Schedule* to keep you on track and lock the concepts in. It will take about 30 days of filling out the form before it becomes a habit. That said, once you're living into your life plan, people will begin to notice the sense of clarity and purpose with which you live, and you will also begin to experience a deep sense of meaning. It's worked for millions of people and it will work for you, too.



With that, let's get started. Simply watch the first video and go from there... Here's to living a life of clarity, purpose and meaning.

# MODULE ONE

## LET'S GET STARTED

**1** Spend time reflecting on the major events of your life. List all the major story turns of your life. A story turn might be having met somebody, having experienced a victory or a failure, or having gone through a loss. Regardless, a story turn is a doorway which you can never walk back through. Life changed forever for you, when?

**2** Create a title for each turn and briefly describe what happened. On the number line, circle how positive or negative each event was. Use positive numbers for positive events and negative numbers for negative experiences.

### LIFE TURN

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Description: \_\_\_\_\_

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### LIFE TURN

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# MODULE TWO

## LET'S GET STARTED

1

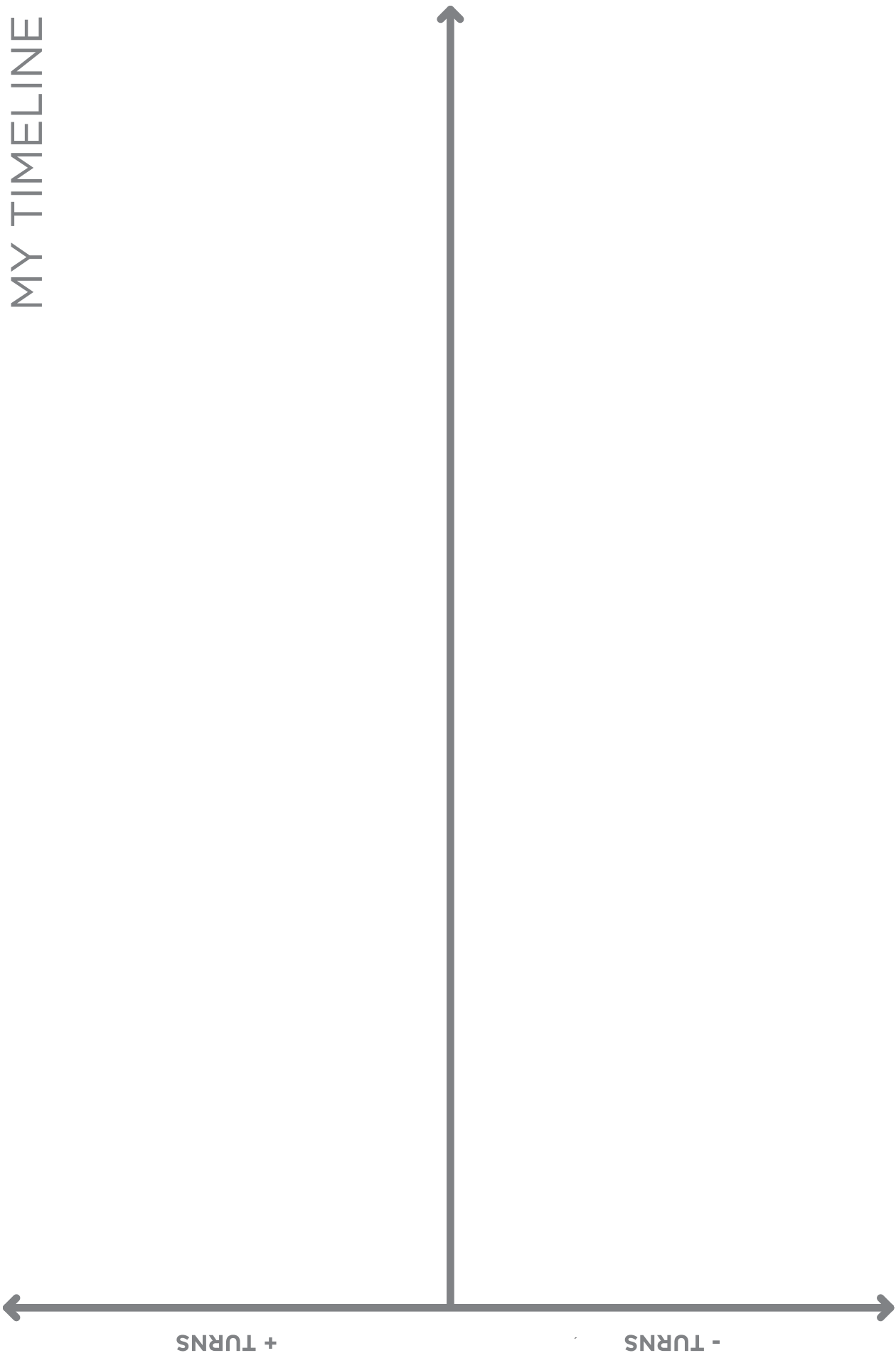
Transfer each of your positive and negative turns onto the visual time line. Mark positive events above the center line and negative events below. We've given you several copies to allow for mistakes and so your time line can evolve.

2

Once you are finished with your time line, step back and consider what a theme of your life might be. Your life theme will evolve over time, so don't worry about "getting it right." For now, though, what is it that your life seems to be about?

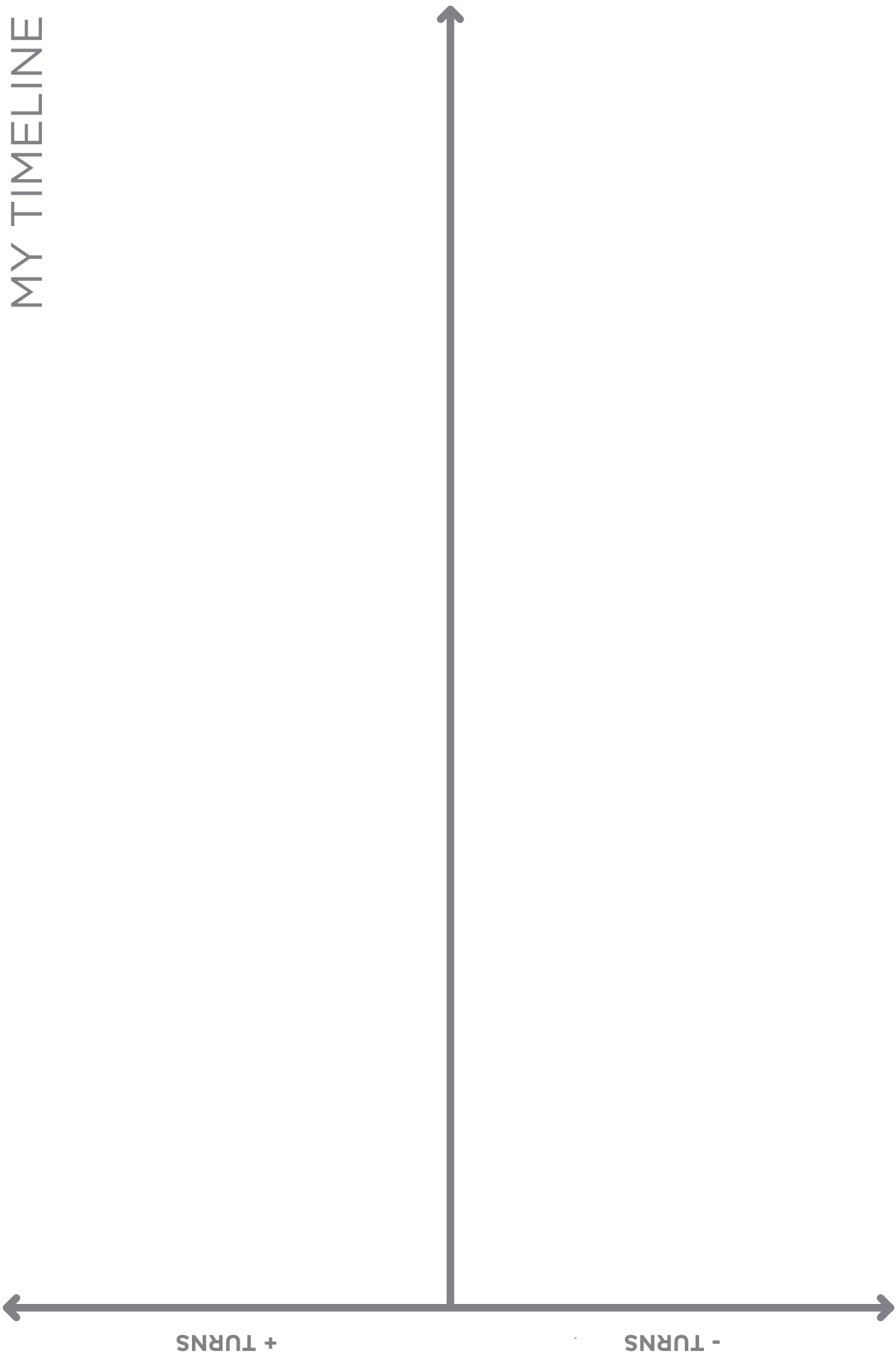


# MY TIMELINE



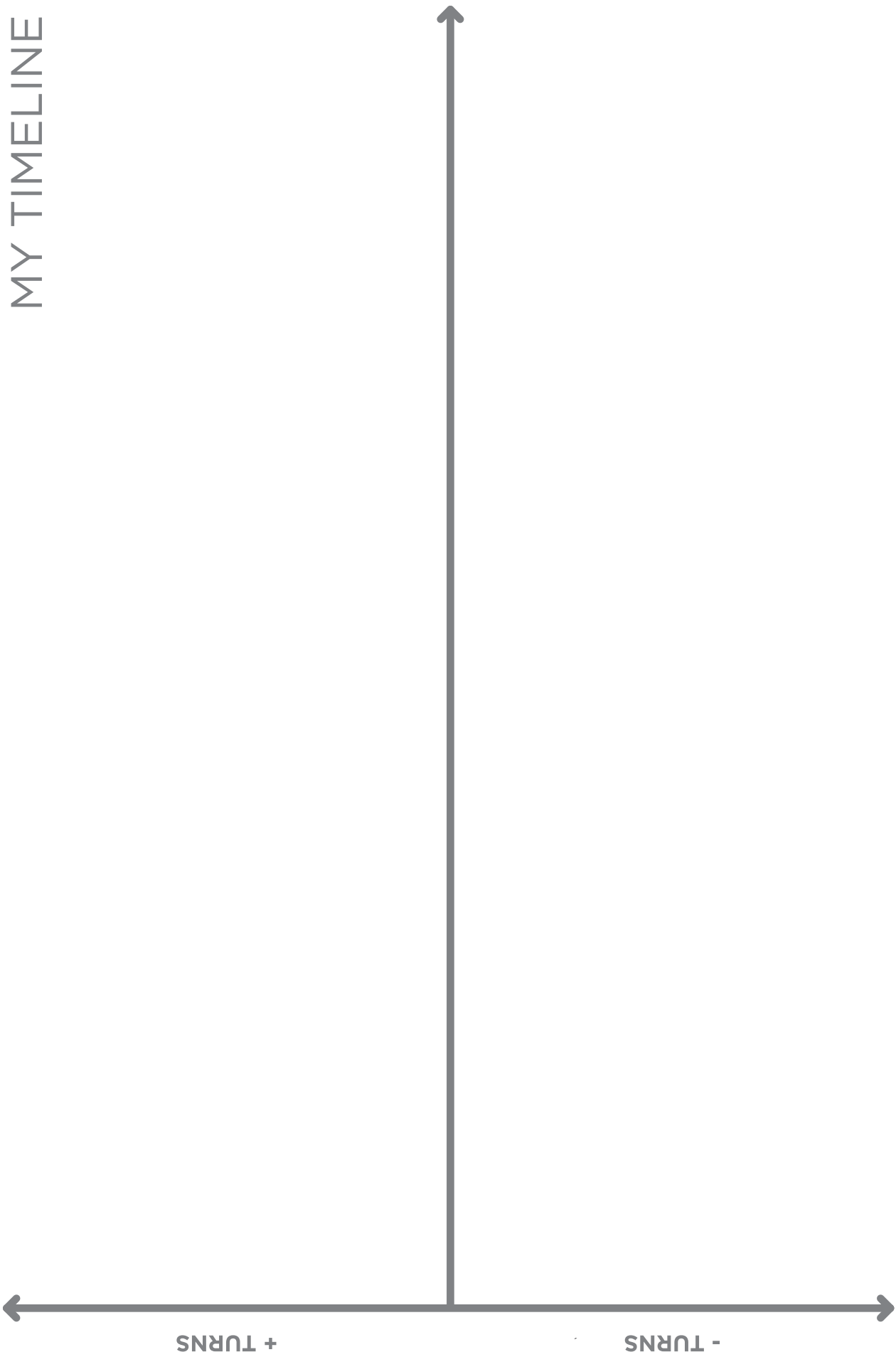
THEME OF MY LIFE:

# MY TIMELINE



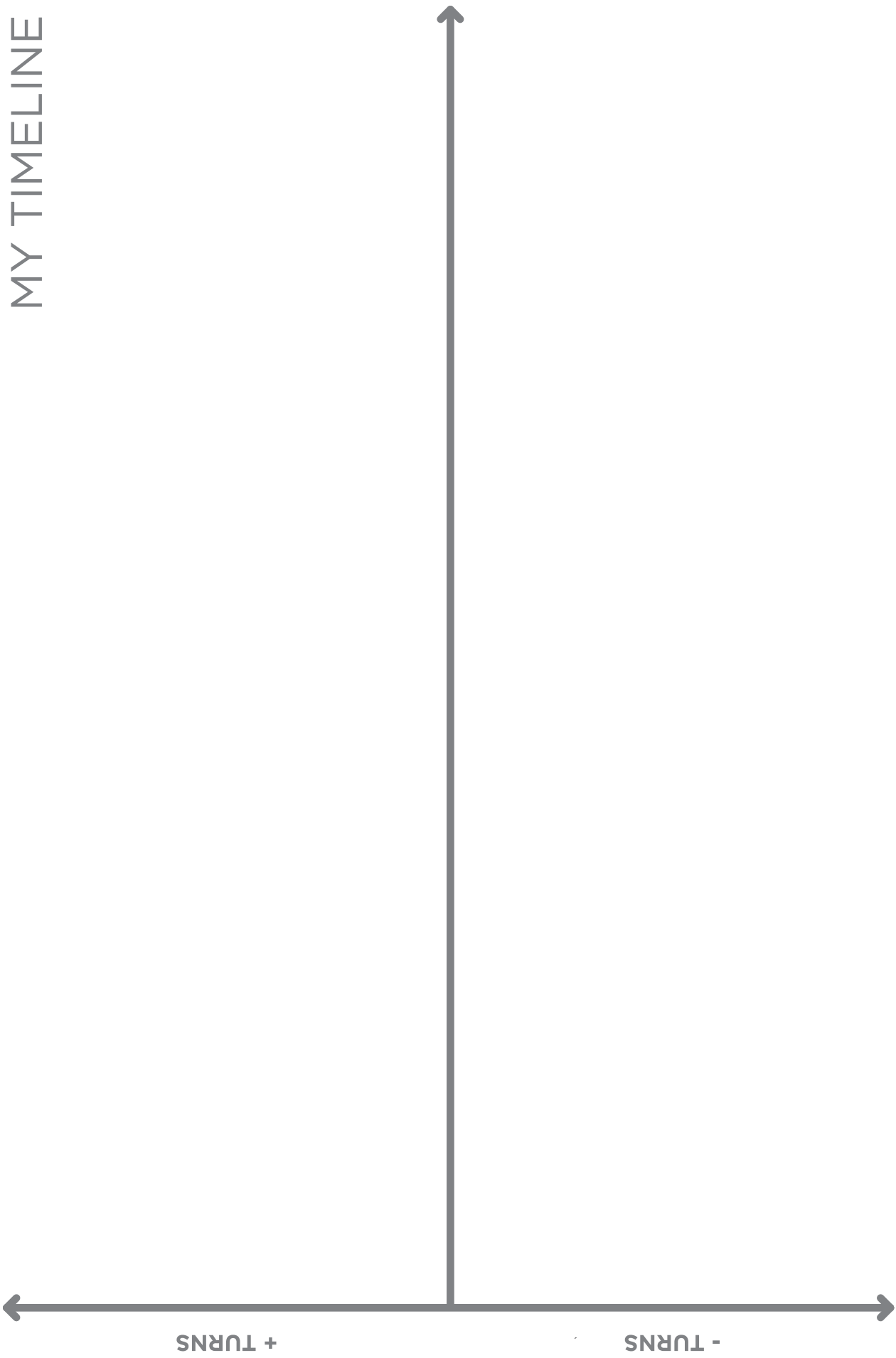
THEME OF MY LIFE:

# MY TIMELINE



THEME OF MY LIFE:

# MY TIMELINE



THEME OF MY LIFE:











# MODULE THREE

## LET'S GET STARTED

1

Many great leaders became great because they experienced negative turns in their lives. Spend time in reflection. Ask yourself if there are benefits to the difficult experiences in your life as well.

### NEGATIVE TURN

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Redemptive Perspective: \_\_\_\_\_

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### NEGATIVE TURN

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### NEGATIVE TURN

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**NEGATIVE TURN**

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**NEGATIVE TURN**

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Redemptive Perspective: \_\_\_\_\_

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# MODULE FOUR

## LET'S GET STARTED

- 1** List five roles you play in life by either circling the examples we've provided or adding your roles to the list.
- 2** Good stories are clear. If you have more than five roles, consider which ones to focus on. Also ask yourself if there are some roles you need to let go of.

### Your Roles (list five)

- Spiritual Being
- Husband
- Mother
- Wife
- Father
- Sister
- Brother
- Friend
- Business Owner
- Leader
- Athlete
- Writer
- Mentor
- Advocate

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_





# MODULE FIVE

## LET'S GET STARTED

- 1** List your five primary roles. (We have given you 6 extra because this is living document.)
- 2** Summarize your ambitions for each role and write them in the space provided.

ROLE	AMBITION
	WHAT DO YOU WANT?
	WHAT DO YOU WANT?

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>AMBITION</b>
	<p>WHAT DO YOU WANT?</p>
	<p>WHAT DO YOU WANT?</p>
	<p>WHAT DO YOU WANT?</p>

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>AMBITION</b>
	WHAT DO YOU WANT?
	WHAT DO YOU WANT?
	WHAT DO YOU WANT?

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>AMBITION</b>
	WHAT DO YOU WANT?
	WHAT DO YOU WANT?
	WHAT DO YOU WANT?











# MODULE SIX

## LET'S GET STARTED

1

Write your name in the center circle. From there, draw bubbles either above or below your circle to create a visual representation for people in your life. When you're done, your atom should look like a living diagram of relationships.

From there, we will begin to reflect on how to make your relational life more healthy.

- We have given you 4 copies of the “relational atom” as this is an evolving document. Feel free to come back and fill it out again as your relationships change.

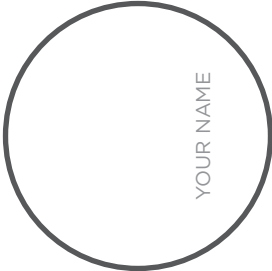
RELATIONAL ATOM



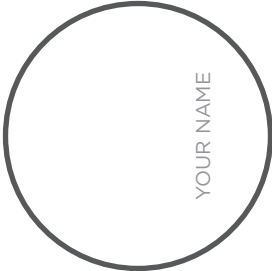
RELATIONAL ATOM



RELATIONAL ATOM



RELATIONAL ATOM





# MODULE SEVEN

## LET'S GET STARTED

1

For each of the major relationships in your life, we've included some reflection questions. Your relational atom is a living, breathing document and it will never be perfect. However, relationships matter and taking some time to evaluate them is important.

Answer the following questions and then take action on your decisions. What relationships do you need to strengthen? What relationships do you need to let go of?

Use the following reflection questions and make changes in your social life.

**1. Which relationships in my social atom are making me a better person?**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
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- \_\_\_\_\_

\* Studies show in five years we will become like the people we hang out with most. One of the changes we can make in our social life is to intentionally spend more time with these people.

**2. Which relationships in my social atom are negatively effecting the person I am becoming?**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
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- \_\_\_\_\_

\* If in five years we will become like the people we hang out with most, how can we adjust our lives to spend less time with these people. Are there relationships here we can let go of?

**3. Who are the people in my social atom I need to spend more time with because I am a positive influence in their lives?**

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\* Not only are we becoming like the people we hang out with, but they are becoming like us. How can we be more intentional about being a positive influence to these people?



# MODULE EIGHT

## LET'S GET STARTED

- 1 What do we want our lives to look like when we are seventy-five? What kind of relationships do we want to have? What does our financial life look like? How healthy are we? Use this module to create vision statements for the important areas of your life, then consider your answers a decision filter moving forward. If a decision doesn't align with the vision you've cast, head in a more healthy direction. Setting a vision for our last season of life helps us gain wisdom in the here and now.

### MY RELATIONSHIPS

When I'm 75 I want my spouse to think of me as...

## MY RELATIONSHIPS

When I'm 75 I want my children to describe me as...

## MY RELATIONSHIPS

When I'm 75 I want my friends to describe me as...

## **MY RELATIONSHIPS**

When I'm 75 I want the people I work with to describe me as...

## **MY CAREER**

When I'm 75 I would like to have accomplished these things in my career...

## **MY FINANCES**

When I'm 75 I would like to have achieved these financial goals...

## **MY HEALTH**

When I'm 75 I would like feel this way about my health and my body...











# MODULE NINE

## LET'S GET STARTED

- 1 Re-write your primary roles.
- 2 Re-write your ambitions for each role.
- 3 Break down each of your ambitions to projects you can take actionable steps on.

ROLE	AMBITION	PROJECTS

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>AMBITION</b>	<b>PROJECTS</b>

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>AMBITION</b>	<b>PROJECTS</b>

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>AMBITION</b>	<b>PROJECTS</b>



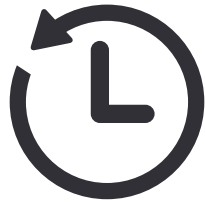








# MODULE TEN



## The *Storyline* Productivity Schedule

The One-Page Key to **Increased Productivity**

By Donald Miller and the Storyline Team

# INTRODUCTION

What if problems like writers block and procrastination were less about your shortcomings and more about how you structure your work day?

The *Storyline Productivity Schedule* is a system I created that more than doubled my productivity. It has worked wonders for me and I believe it will work for you, too.

## WHAT LIFE LOOKED LIKE BEFORE

Not many years ago I was stuck. I'd put two books on the *New York Times Bestsellers* list, but the days of sitting down at a coffee shop and easily firing off words seemed gone. Instead, I'd become a horrible procrastinator. I went from writing a book in six months, to writing a book in a year and then it began to take two years then three years and so on. Writing became a chore rather than a positive work habit.

I thought for a long time the problem was me, in my inability to write. But in researching writers block and procrastination, I realized the problem was in how I was structuring my day.

For instance, before creating the *Storyline Productivity Schedule* my day looked like this:

**Morning:** Instead of writing my book, I'd return emails, write blogs, go for walks and wait for creative inspiration to strike. It never did.

**Afternoon:** I'd eat lunch and get nappy, then cancel my evening appointments to write. But by then I was too distracted and tired.

**Evening:** I'd get a little writing done, but it wasn't focussed, and the process was a chore. I'd tell myself I could try again tomorrow.

This pattern continued for years and I failed to produce anything worthy of publication. I was in a jam. Turns out, publishers don't like it when you take four years to write a book.

## THEN I REALIZED THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

I realized my career was going to fall apart if I didn't do something, so I ordered every book I could find about the creative process, procrastination, positive work habits and willpower. I think I read nearly twenty in all. Some were better than others but from each I made changes to the way I approach my job.

Each book referenced untold scientific experiments and studies helping me understand why people procrastinate, what time of day the brain is most productive, and what it really takes to finish a large project.

Here's what I realized:

**“Along with managing my time, I needed to manage my mental energy.”**

What I discovered was the brain worked like a muscle, and the whole time I was fighting my mind to sit down and work, I was wearing down the muscle. I didn't need to manage my time better, I needed to manage my mental energy better. I needed a new way to structure my day so I was getting the most out of my mind when my mind was the strongest.

## SO I CREATED A GREAT TOOL

To be more productive, I created a one-page sheet to fill out each morning. Unlike a normal day-planner we might use to manage our time, my schedule managed my mental energy.

**Dr. Henry Cloud says the three keys to extreme productivity are:**

- 1 To attend** - This means to focus on one thing until serious progress has been made.
- 2 To inhibit** - This means there must be a strong ability to inhibit distractions from getting through.
- 3 A working memory** - This means we need to be reminded throughout the day of what we are supposed to be working on.

When our work is frazzled, when we say yes to everything and when we fail to focus on what's important, we get less done.

Something had to change in the way I did my work and the *Storyline Productivity Schedule* did the trick.

Here are some things that make the Storyline schedule different:

- It forces you to work on your most important projects first.
- It forces you to only focus on three important projects per day.
- It kills off the mental bugs that cause procrastination.
- It reminds you each day of your life theme and so creates a decision filter.
- It limits the number of appointments you will take.
- It builds in rest and reward so your mind recharges and is capable of working harder in the long run.
- It allows open-ended work sessions so the clock works for you rather than you working for the clock.

Each module in this small, easy-to-use system is designed to overcome some bit of creative struggle and make the creative process fun and productive.

## AND DID THE TOOL HELP?

The result? Within four months I'd finished a new book. No kidding. That's the fastest I've ever written a book. It took me another two months to edit it and the book was off to the printer. My publisher said it might be the best book I'd written, so my new method also meant I wasn't sacrificing quality.

Without the *Storyline Productivity Schedule*, I doubt I'd have been able to take new ground. Gone are the days of being frozen and afraid and back are the days of creating whatever I want, whether it's a book, a new speech or even a new division of my company. I'm focussed and productive.

# YOUR WORK MATTERS

The *Storyline Productivity Schedule* is yours for free. At Storyline, we're devoted to helping people and brands understand and tell their stories. The *Storyline Productivity Schedule* plays a significant part in that mission.

We think it's a tragedy when brilliant people aren't able to get their ideas into the world. Whether you're a painter, a small-business owner, a writer, life coach, marketing executive, a physical trainer or have any kind of job in which you need to consistently create new material, this one-page planner that repeats every day will be of use to you.

Our hope is you use it to take a massive amount of new ground in your work.

I'm grateful for what you do, and grateful you've allowed us to help.

**Donald Miller**

*Founder of Storyline and StoryBrand*



## HOW THE *STORYLINE PRODUCTIVITY SCHEDULE* WORKS



Each working day, for the next 30 days, fill out the simple, easy-to-use *Storyline Productivity Schedule*. If you do this thirty times, you'll develop new habits, become more productive, overcome procrastination and complete projects that have been gathering dust.

Once you've completed thirty days, you can continue using the SPS but you may not need to. The idea here is to change the way you structure your time and approach your work. By the time you've done this thirty times, approaching your work this way may become habit. Feel free to use it again to reinforce your new work structure.

Here's what each page looks like:

A screenshot of the 'The Storyline Productivity Schedule' form. The form is titled 'The Storyline Productivity Schedule' and includes a 'TODAY'S DATE' field. It is divided into several sections: 'PROJECT ONE', 'PROJECT TWO', and 'PROJECT THREE', each with a progress bar and a 'Post/Reward' field. To the right, there are sections for 'IF I COULD LIVE TODAY OVER AGAIN I...', 'THINGS I GET TO ENJOY TODAY', and 'APPOINTMENTS'. At the bottom, there is a 'TO DO' list and a 'MY LIFE THEME' field.

**The *Storyline Productivity Schedule* (SPS)** works best for people who need to manage their own time. If your work day involves the need to make progress on several large projects, the SPS will be of benefit. The SPS is designed to help people become more productive, overcome procrastination, stop comparing their productivity to an ideal and enhance creativity. The SPS forces time to work around your brain rather than your brain to act as a servant to time. Here is how each of the components you'll fill out each day work:

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR DAILY USE

- Print out 30 SPS pages, three-hole punch them and insert them into a binder.
- Fill out the entire page every day before you start working.
- Fill out the page in this order:
  1. Today's Date
  2. If I could do today over again I'd
  3. Things I get to enjoy today
  4. Appointments
  5. My Life Theme
  6. Project One and following...
- When you're done with your day, transfer incomplete projects to the following day. This can also be done the next morning.

## HERE'S WHY EACH SECTION IS IMPORTANT



### IF I COULD LIVE TODAY OVER AGAIN I'D

After you fill in today's date, fill in this section before you even think about your work. An integral part of the SPS, involves asking yourself what would happen most if you could "live today over again." This idea was first proposed by Dr. Viktor Frankl, a Viennese psychologist who worked with depressed and suicidal patients. Asking them to consider "what they'd do differently the first time around" was a mental trick that allowed them to assess what was really important and learn from their past mistakes even before they made them. You'll find asking yourself this simple but profound question will keep you from getting caught up in trivial problems and will allow you to focus more on what really matters. Most people wake up worried about all the stuff they have to get done, but if you think about what you'd do differently if you pretend you're living today over again, you'll find yourself realizing most of the stuff you worry about isn't worth it and instead add more relational elements into your life. It should be noted Dr. Frankl cared for more than 30,000 depressed

IF I COULD LIVE TODAY OVER AGAIN I'D

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patients and not one committed suicide under his watch. Asking yourself what you'd do differently if you were living today over again is one of the keys to living a more meaningful life and assessing priorities.



## THINGS I GET TO ENJOY TODAY

Dr. Neil Fiore is one of the world's leading experts on procrastination. He's spent decades studying why we tend to put off our work and has worked with thousands of clients to help them become more productive. Interestingly, one of the reasons Dr. Fiore says we procrastinate is because we believe by doing our work, we're missing out on something fun or enjoyable. He found when he had his clients make a list of all the enjoyable things they get to do later in the day, they tended to be more willing and able to get their work done because they knew they were still going to get to enjoy life. Use this section to make a list of a few things you get to enjoy later in the day—such as dinner with your spouse, a walk with your dog, a football game or even a great meal. You'll find yourself much more willing to work when you know you're actually not missing out on a good life. Not to mention, you'll get much more enjoyment out of those rewards later, after you've earned them.

THINGS I GET TO ENJOY TODAY

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### Writing down Things I Get to Enjoy Today helps you:

- Gain a sense of calm by reminding you life is, in fact, enjoyable.
- Focus on work now because you know you get to enjoy something later.
- Be more present with others later in the day knowing you got your work done earlier.



## APPOINTMENTS

Of course we all have appointments throughout the day, so we've made space for you to write down up to 7. If you have more than 7, you'll want to reconsider how available you're making yourself to people. Is it affecting your

APPOINTMENTS

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ability to do your work? If so, scale back your availability and make sure you're not using appointments to put off the work you know you should be doing.



## TO DO LIST

Creating a short To Do list will keep you from worrying about all the stuff you need to get done that day. Once it's on paper, there's no more confusion. Don't use this space for major projects, as those will go elsewhere, but instead use them for things you know you need to do but can put off until after the important work is done. Only tackle your To Do list after you've taken new ground on your most important project.

TO DO

<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

### Keeping a To Do list helps:

- Relieve stress by getting smaller items off your mind and onto paper.
- Increase your dependability by insuring you've got the little stuff. written down and can follow through after you tackle the big stuff.
- Increase productivity by daily writing down and accomplishing tasks.
- Keeps you from forgetting the little stuff.



## MY LIFE THEME

If you've gone through the Storyline Life Planning Process, you already know your life theme. If you haven't, simply state what it is your life is about or what you'd like to have been known for before you die. Use your life theme as a filter from here on out. Does each of your projects fit within your life theme? If not, stop working on them or change your life theme. Too many of our clients spend too much time working on projects that have nothing to do with their decided purpose. Your life theme is your decision filter.

MY LIFE THEME: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Writing down your Life Theme helps you:

- Gain clarity by giving you a decision filter through which you can weed out projects and tasks that aren't "you."
- Build self esteem by reminding you each morning you are on the planet for a reason and a purpose.
- Live free from regret by insuring your work is moving in the direction of your life theme.



## PROJECT ONE

What is that major project you need to focus on? In their book *Willpower*, Roy F. Baumeister and John Tierney make a compelling argument that the brain works like a muscle, meaning it gets fatigued as the day goes on. For this reason, a productive person will tackle

their most important project first. In fact, if it's possible to get an hour or two's worth of work done before any significant conversations, answering email and, for some, even breakfast, you'll find your productivity will dramatically increase. We know people who will not turn on their phones until after their first work session is complete. Often our clients claim they get more done during their first two hours than they will over the next 12. If a writer, for instance, writes 1,000 words each day before 9AM, they will complete more than 6 full-length books each year. You do the math. Protect this first work session like it's your retirement, because it is.

After a good night's sleep, the brain is sharp, fresh and ready to work in the morning. Don't let that time go to returning emails and helping other people get their work done. Or worse, don't let it go to reading dumb internet sites. You can do that later. Under Project One, write the name of the project you'll spend the first two hours or so working on then get to it straight away.

PROJECT ONE

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\_\_\_\_\_ H: M: \_\_\_\_\_

## Tips for Tackling Project One:

- Develop a morning routine and repeat it 5 or 6 days each week. Example: Get up, take a walk, take a shower, make coffee, then work on project one.
- Ignore all morning criticism. The more self criticism you fight, the more weary your brain becomes. Delay all negative thoughts until after your morning session. You'll find it much easier to fight these thoughts first thing in the morning because it's during these hours your mind is the strongest.
- Unless answering email is part of your project, save it for later. And don't engage in significant conversations that might sidetrack your mind. The idea is to get into the chair and start working as fast as possible before anything can interrupt you. If you have to take the kids to school, tackle project one immediately when you get to the office.

## Writing down the title and goal of Project One every morning helps you by:

- Helping you focus on the one major project that must get done.
- Making the whole day feel great because you got the important work done early.
- Increasing productivity by focussing on one thing, every day, until it's done.



## REST/REWARD

Because the mind works like a muscle, it fatigues easily and needs regular breaks. You'll find if you take a break to rest your mind, you'll come back to your work rested and ready to start another session. These breaks should happen every 90 to 120 minutes and should last approximately 15 to 30 minutes. Consider each break a reward and write them down in advance. Your break may be as simple as going for a walk, taking a nap or even having coffee with a friend. You'll also find when you do something that takes your mind off your work, you'll come back with fresh and new ideas. Many productive people find themselves stuck, then walk the dog and come back with a terrific new idea. Mark down your rest/reward breaks in advance so you'll know you're not a slave to the work but rather it's part of a productive, enjoyable day.

Rest/Reward: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Writing down Rest/Reward breaks between project sessions helps you:

- Take intentional breaks to rest your mind.
- Increase productivity because you recharged.
- Stimulates creativity by getting your mind focussed on something else, allowing inspiration to come on its own terms.



## TIME MANAGMENT

Many people experience guilt when working within a normal time-management system. If they say they'll work from 8am to 10am on a project and are interrupted, they feel guilty for not fulfilling their morally neutral expectations. Dr. Neil Fiore believes this creates a negative attitude about our work that contributes to procrastination. Because of this, the SPS has no set time for when you will start or stop a project. You simply start working when you like and stop working when you feel like you've accomplished enough. Not only this, but with the SPS, you actually mark down how long you worked on a project once you've completed that session. If you worked for 90 minutes, simply mark H:1 M:30 and you'll have plenty to feel good about. Marking how long you worked on a project AFTER you've completed each session allows positive emotions to be associated with your work, contributing to your sense of accomplishment and increasing the chances you'll want to come back to do more work.

H: M:



## PROJECT TWO

Project Two may be a continuation of Project One or another project all together. Simply repeat the process as you move throughout your day. It's unlikely you'll be able to devote optimum mental performance to more than three projects per day, so we've only included three.

PROJECT TWO

H: M:



We've included this small icon of a brain to reveal how much mental energy you lose throughout your day. It's a subtle reminder to work on your important projects first and, as the day goes by, to gain ground on other projects that are less important.

## **NOW LET'S GET STARTED**

Tomorrow morning, fill out your first SPS from beginning to end and continue to do so each working day until you've completed all 30 pages. We firmly believe this simple, elegant, thoughtful tool will dramatically increase your creative productivity.

**Here's to allowing your brilliance to take new ground in the world!**



# SCHEDULE KEY

The *Storyline Productivity Schedule* works best for people who need to manage their own time. If your work day is a blank canvas in which you have to make progress on several large projects, the SPS will be of benefit. The SPS is designed to help people become more productive, overcome procrastination, stop comparing their productivity to an ideal and enhance creativity. The SPS forces time to work around your brain rather than your brain to act as a servant of time. Here is how each of the components on the daily schedule work:



**PROJECT ONE:** Throughout your day, your mental capacity diminishes with use just like any other muscle.

Procrastination often takes place when we put off an important project until the end of the day, making it much more difficult to accomplish because we are tackling it with less mental capacity.

Therefore, our first project of the day should be our most important. Because you tackle it (or a portion of it) first, you'll experience greater success and you will soon begin to associate it with progress rather than frustration.

**H:\_\_\_M:\_\_\_ :** Many people experience guilt when working within a normal time-management system. If they say they'll work from 8am to 10am on a project and are then interrupted, they feel guilty for not fulfilling their morally neutral expectations. Reverse scheduling allows for the freedom and flow of a given day. Simply use this space to mark how much time you spent on the project once you've completed that work session. This insures you'll feel good about your work and begin to associate the project with positive feedback rather than comparisons to unrealistic expectations. You'll be more likely to give hours to it and this number will likely grow.

**Rest/Reward:** Because the mind works like a muscle, it fatigues easily and needs regular breaks. These breaks may be as simple as going for a walk or even taking a nap. If having coffee with a friend recharges you, feel free. The idea is to take your mind completely off your project for a period of time before either coming back to it or moving on to another project.

**PROJECT TWO:** Project two may be a continuation of project one or another project all together. Simply repeat the process as you move throughout your day. It is unlikely you'll be able to devote optimum mental performance to more than three projects per day.

**MY LIFE THEME:** We've included this box to allow you to write your personal life theme daily. A personal life theme can evolve over time, but it's to be a statement about what you want your life to be about. A personal life theme is a primary component of a decision filter. If a project or task is not in keeping with your life theme, it may be best to let it pass. If you've gone through Storyline 2.0, write your personal life theme here.

**IF I COULD DO LIFE OVER AGAIN I'D:** The process of considering the day as though you were reliving it comes from psychologist Viktor E. Frankl. He developed this simple mental trick in order to help his clients live more meaningful lives. Clients who were caught up in trivial problems suddenly realized they'd rather spend time with family or loved ones, work on projects they enjoyed and so on. Reverse scheduling is about not letting time manage your life, but rather living the most meaning-filled and productive life possible. We recommend writing down a couple of these per day to keep you from becoming a slave to unforeseen and often trivial pressures.

**THINGS I GET TO ENJOY TODAY:** According to Dr. Neil Fiore, procrastination often occurs when a person believes they won't be able to enjoy their lives because they have to work. Those who suffer this perspective often neglect their work then feel guilty and so don't enjoy life either. To his clients, he simply recommends listing the things they get to enjoy each day before tackling their work. He found the success of this simple exercise profound. His clients were more motivated to work because they felt they were not going to miss out on life. Make sure to follow through on much of your list so you are sure to enjoy life, too.

**APPOINTMENTS:** Most Storyline clients keep their calendars digitally or in a separate planner. However, those manage their own schedules often have less than five appointments per day. Use the appointments section to manage time-specific meetings or obligations.

**TO-DO:** Use this section as a daily task list.

# The *Storyline* Productivity Schedule

TODAY'S DATE:    /    /

## PROJECT ONE

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Rest/Reward: \_\_\_\_\_  
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## PROJECT TWO

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75%

Rest/Reward: \_\_\_\_\_  
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## PROJECT THREE

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50%

Rest/Reward: \_\_\_\_\_  
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## IF I COULD LIVE TODAY OVER AGAIN I'D

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## THINGS I GET TO ENJOY TODAY

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## APPOINTMENTS

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## TO DO

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MY LIFE THEME: \_\_\_\_\_  
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# CONCLUSION

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

### Four steps to living great stories:

1. **Remember your story matters.** Thomas Paine said, “We have it in our power to begin the world again,” and this is true. But accepting this reality is fearful because it bears a certain responsibility. But we can’t live in reaction. We are strong believers God has put fate in our hands. We really do shape our reality. Your story matters. Let’s accept full agency for our lives and move forward.
2. **Take action.** People are often inspired by this process but inspiration must be followed by action. Use the Storyline Productivity Schedule to stay on track. Once you create your life plan, fill out the SPS every day for thirty days and you’re life won’t look the same, we promise.
3. **Understand people will not want you to change.** When you begin to live a better story, you will encounter relational resistance. This may come from spouses, friends, co-workers and even enemies. Many people shut down their stories at the first bit of resistance, but can you name a single world-changer who didn’t face serious resistance? Count on it; it will happen.
4. **Remember, the stakes are high.** If you’re aiming to live a great story, the stakes are high. Many people may have their moral compasses set by the story you live and the lives of your family and friends can forever be shaped by the story you live. Jump into your new life plan with full abandon and you may positively affect thousands.