



Where Does Your Time Go?

A practical guide to align your use of time with your priorities, values and professional journey.

MARGARET COLLINS

CONFIDENCE | CLARITY | COURAGE

VISIT MARGARETCOLLINS.COM

Using the
Where Does Your Time Go
Workbook

Every week we each have 168 hours. No more, no less.

For busy professionals, these can disappear in a blur. For many academics and researchers the day is filled with meetings, lectures, grant writing or supervising. More meetings and unexpected crises arrive daily and those emails...

It's no wonder many of us feel as though there is never enough time to do what really matters.

This tool is foundational for busy people who want to get more of the right stuff done.

These are my reflections

.....

on ___ /___ /_____

What takes your time?

We've all had those "red line" moments.

- The phone call that changes everything.
- The emergency email.
- The "red line" appearing in your carefully planned day, crossing out everything that you'd so thoughtfully prioritised.

No matter how busy you are, you make time.
A crying child, a critical deadline, a colleague in urgent need.
You don't hesitate. The time appears, because it must.
These events are rare, and rightly so, and we respond to them with compassion and urgency.

While red lines are memorable, what about things we don't notice?
The slow leaks of time that disappear every day.

- The email that takes 45 minutes to perfect instead of the 4 minutes it could have taken to answer.
- The hours spent in over-preparation, refining slides or "over-researching" a simple task that really didn't need it.
- The scrolling "just for a break" that swallowed your lunch, so you barely remember what you ate.

These moments don't feel like red lines.

They don't even feel like choices.

But added together,
these time leaks become the real emergencies because they quietly take away the time and energy that should be yours.



 © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

1. Your Red lines: The urgent stuff

Think back over the last week.
List the urgent events or 'non-negotiables' you responded to.
Include genuine emergencies, critical deadlines or last-minute requests.

Red line event	Why was it urgent?	How did I respond?



Reflections:
Would I have changed anything?

Are my expectations/plans realistic?

Are my support systems sustainable?

Anything else?

Dr Margaret Collins: info@MargaretCollins.com © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

2. Your Time Leaks: The things that stole your time

Now, list the tasks or habits that drained your time in less visible ways.

Include overlong emails, unstructured meetings, unhelpful perfectionism, excessive preparation, digital distractions, working while exhausted...

Time leak	How long it took	It should have taken...



Reflections:

Which had the bigger impact:
the red lines or the time leaks?

How much time/energy did the leaks drain compared to the rare emergencies?

If you reduced just one type of time leak, what would it give back to you?

Dr Margaret Collins: info@MargaretCollins.com © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

3. Spotting Leaks before they become a Flood

Time leaks often hide in plain sight.
You can spot them by noticing when:

- A task is taking far longer than planned, the email creeping towards 30 minutes, slides you're polishing for the 5th time.
- A meeting or conversation drifts beyond its end with no clear decision or next step.
- You're madly "multi-tasking" but going nowhere fast.
- You're staring at the screen with no sense of where to go or what's next.
- You feel guilty for thinking of a break, even though your focus has already gone.
- You use preparation as a shield - researching, refining or rehearsing well beyond what's really helpful.



When you notice one of these "leak habits", pause and ask:

- If I stopped here, would this be good enough?
- What's the simplest next step that moves this forward?
- What's the best use of my time right now?

Plugging a leak isn't about cutting corners or being lazy, it's about protecting your time and energy for the priorities that truly matter.

Dr Margaret Collins: info@MargaretCollins.com © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute



4. Are your Leaks Linked to Habit or to Energy?

Not all time leaks are the same.
Some are the product of habits - small, automatic behaviours that eat away at your focus:

- Sitting down with a cup of tea and instantly reaching for your phone.
- Seeing an email and automatically opening your inbox instead of finishing the task in front of you.
- Saying “yes” to a quick chat without considering the impact on you, your diary or your energy.

Other leaks are more about energy than habit.
They appear when we’re already depleted:

- The slump you get if you’ve slept badly or eaten too much cake at lunchtime.
- Pushing through when your brain is already foggy.
- Expecting the same focus at 4pm as at 10am.
- Ignoring natural cycles of energy and pushing on with unrealistic expectations.
- Feeling guilty about resting, so you keep working — but without real results.



Sometimes the smartest fix is more awareness.
Ask yourself:

- Is this a habit I need to interrupt?
- Is this an energy issue where I need to rest, reset or come back at a better time?

Recognising the difference helps you plug the leak — before it turns into a flood.

Dr Margaret Collins: info@MargaretCollins.com © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute

WANT MORE?



This workbook uncovers the hidden patterns of how you use your time.

Emergencies happen to us all. Strategic "fire prevention" can avoid some crises altogether.

Time leaks are activities that often feel very familiar, comfortable, even like friends.
But they steal our time and productivity.

This reflection helps you step back from the daily demands of "doing the job" to assess how much time you could gain if you plugged even one leak.

Where will you start?

I hope this content has been useful.
If you know you need more, do reach out to me. I'd love to hear from you.

You can always explore the other resources on my website.

MargaretCollins.com/

Resources

Let me know how you get on!

Margaret

Dr Margaret Collins: info@MargaretCollins.com © 2025 All rights reserved Do not redistribute