

DUCKLOW'S

BLOCK BOOKING YOUR TIME

BLOCK BOOKING IS A WAY OF "CAPTURING YOUR TIME" RATHER THAN REACTING TO THE MANY URGENCIES THAT INTRUDE INTO YOUR LIVES. EACH OF US HAS THE SAME AMOUNT OF TIME IN A 24-HOUR DAY. WHAT DIFFERS BETWEEN US IS THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT WE CREATE TO LIVE OUR LIVES EFFECTIVELY.

BLOCK BOOKING – CAPTURING YOUR TIME

Block booking is a simple concept. Each of us has 7 days per week, and, therefore, 21 blocks of time (morning, afternoon, evening). Part of the concept of block booking is to see our days in "blocks" rather than in a series of appointments or hours on a clock.

When we block our time, we block our "work time" first. This is the time that we are paid for, or the time that, within the home, we do our chores and have our responsibilities. This work time requires about 10-11 blocks per week and this is indicated on the graph with "**Wk**".

Secondly, we block in our marriage, family, friendship time. Again, we think of blocks, not a few minutes here, and a few minutes there. To set aside 3 hours in one evening or on a Saturday morning for our family or our children has great impact on their growth. This does not mean that we don't have all kinds of additional "incidental" time with our family — we do — but this time does not substitute for block time. On the graph of the week, this priority is indicated with "**M / F**" (depending on whether it is for family or marriage). Block in 2 to 3 blocks of time for marriage and family (varies according to the week's stresses).

The third block is called "individual" or "self" and requires 2-3 blocks each week. This is the time when you do the stuff of your own life (e.g. fitness, taking your car in for an oil change, organizing your filing system) and is indicated with "**IS**". Note: self-time is not more time to do more work. If you use your self-time for work only, then change your graph to indicate this as work time. A problem with self-time is that

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6420 FOX STREET, WEST VANCOUVER, BC V7W 2C4
WWW.THEDUCKLOWS.CA | 604 921 9542

it can end up being “dithering”—time when you don’t do much but stare at the computer screen and worry. Self-time is as purposeful as family and work time.

The fourth block is “recovery time” (William Covey calls this “sharpening your saw”) and this may include doing a favorite hobby, extended time of reading, a Sabbath rest of reading and walking. Recovery or rest time is normally time alone for personal reflection. Indicate this time with “**Rx**”. Each person in the family needs 2-3 blocks for personal recovery and rest. This is the time to recharge our batteries.

Graphing your week is an important discipline. On some weeks your time will be manic and on other weeks you will feel that you have nothing to do! Block booking also gives you a chance to report your activities to a supervisor. If you are paid for 40-50 hours per week, your time schedule will want to consistently show this.

Graph your week for about one month from today. Be as specific as you can about where you are investing your time.

I know that each week will probably be much similar to the other weeks, but if you have a significantly different week (e.g. travelling on business for 3 days in one week) then you will need to adjust your graph to indicate this.

It is good for being “on purpose” in your family to review weekly your graph at a pre-agreed time with your spouse and/or your kids. Do this weekly.

AS THE EXAMPLE BELOW...

This family used Tuesday evening as a family night. On that night, they had a special dinner, turned off the telephones and TV, played Scrabble and talked about how they were planning their week. Since there were 2 teenagers in the family, this planning ahead for the weekend was really important.

This family had long workdays on Monday and Wednesday and this allowed self and recuperation time on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Saturday night was the couple’s “date night” that they sometimes spent with friends, but were often on their own.

	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
AM	M/F	Wk	Wk	Wk	Wk	Wk	Rx
AFT	F	Wk	Wk	Wk	IS	Rx	Rx

	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
PM	M	Wk	IS	Wk	IS	IS	M

SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE ABOUT BLOCK BOOKING

- * Your block booking needs to reflect your work priorities first. Secondly, the family focuses on the times and needs of the kids. In the example above, the family set aside Thursday and Friday evening to flex around the kids sporting and other activities.
- * Avoid giving family block times to those times when you are most exhausted (e.g. Friday evening when you are most tired from the week). This might better be self-time—but you decide.
- * Restoration time should be something that you look forward to. Be creative about how you spend your restoration time. Making a list of what you like to do helps a great deal.
- * Anticipate stress times in your monthly schedule and book accordingly. This does not mean to overwork. It does mean to anticipate that family and restoration time are more important because of the demands of the schedule.
- * Anticipate 1 or 2 slow workweeks in slower months that tend to be less demanding for your work. This is a great time to catch up on reading, studying and planning. Make sure that you invest in this slower period rather than dither it away.
- * Book your holidays around the more discouraging times of your calendar year. For example, Carole and I book 2-3 mid-week “weekends” away each year to refresh our marriage and to plan for our future. February, May and November are the months that work well for us.
- * If you do counselling as a main aspect of your work, try 30-45 minute appointments rather than the psychiatric hour. People adjust to limited time and tend to appreciate it more.
- * Block booking is not a “jail” for your time. It permits you to live more “on purpose” than if you “winged it” like most people do. Winging it makes your week’s circumstance decide your priorities. Block booking places the template of your values on the circumstances of your life.
- * The key to maintaining this habit is agreeing to meet weekly with your partner or spouse to evaluate the blocks of your graph. This in itself only takes a moment but determines more than almost anything else the outcome of your week.
- * Depending upon your freedom to create your work schedule, work blocks should be limited to only one or two grouping of activities. Let me give you my schedule to see if this makes sense. Monday mornings is self-time and you can usually find me in a coffee shop reading. Monday afternoons I do counselling, as I do all day Thursdays. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays I am a professor at Carey Theological College and on Fridays I write. Weekends flex quite a bit depending on conferences, family priorities and the like. Not much for F time right now as our kids are out of the home. See below:

	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
AM	Church	IS	College	College	Cnsl	Write	Rx
AFT	F	Cnsl	College	College	Cnsl	Write	Rx
PM	M / F	IS	IS	IS	Rx	M	M