

Setting goals is, arguably, the most discussed subject in the world of coaching. Do we have goals"? Of course, we do! Are we taking meaningful, impactful and sustainable steps towards achieving our goals?

Well, that's where most of us feel challenged!

Achieving our goals, or rather, not achieving them, is not due to lack of effort, preparation or good intention. In fact, there's one reason that rises above all else that prevents us from feeling like we've been productive and purposeful when putting our head on the pillow at night. That reason is our perception that we don't have enough time.

When my clients and I dive deep to uncover why they haven't achieved their stated goals, whether I'm working with a corporate CEO transitioning to becoming an entrepreneur, a Millennial moving into the workforce, or a divorced parent shifting to single parenthood, the complaint is the same, *"I don't have time! I can't get everything done that I need/want to get done! I'm always behind!"*

One way we handle this is by creating "Life Buckets" that we make deposits into each and every day. When we live in alignment with these buckets, time seemingly appears and we are better able to accomplish our goals.

Here are 5 steps to creating your own "Life Buckets" and to find the time you never thought you had:

1. Identify all the activities you take part in during the day, the week, and the month. This part will take a bit of work. You need to literally write everything down on paper. Include, eating, sleeping, running, calling your mother, listening to your mother-in-law complain endlessly, scroll Instagram, work, read, Netflix, etc...you get the message.
2. Now think about what values are most important to you in life and categorize them as your "Life Buckets". These are your priorities and you can have up to five of them. Choose from categories like Family, Relationships, Romance, Health/Wellness, Parenting, Fun/Enjoyment, Career/Profession, or any other area that is truly important to you. When it comes to your buckets, less is more, and it's important that you set a limit of 5, and ideally 4. This will help you prioritize and focus on what really matters to you. Be sure to name your buckets, so you can lovingly refer to them as you go about your day and "make deposits."

3. Begin listing your activities, thoughtfully and consciously, under your bucket categories. If “Relationships” is one of our life buckets and listening to your mother in law complain helps you develop that relationship, then do it, with the recognition that you are not only *not* wasting your time, but are actually making a deposit in your Relationship Bucket. If Fun/Enjoyment is one of your buckets, then you must make sure to plan fun activities and allow yourself to enjoy these activities, the same way you would enjoy making a guilt free deposit into your bank account.

4. Develop the habit of always asking, at any given moment, “What am I doing?”. You should be able to answer honestly, with confidence and clarity while saying, “I’m making a deposit in my _____ Bucket.” If you cannot be certain that your action (whatever it may be) is not depositing in one of your Life Buckets, then it’s likely that you are escaping, numbing, procrastinating, people pleasing, and engaging in the behaviors that rob you of precious resources and make you feel like there’s never enough.

Practice saying *no* to activities that don’t make a deposit in any of your Life Buckets. This action involves changing some potentially long standing habits, but like any practice, with repetition, you will master this art and give yourself the ultimate gift of time.

Our Life Buckets are meant to be full, even overflowing. They need daily deposits (big or small) in order for us to have a sense of joy, purpose, and balance in our lives. By creating awareness practices, and learning the tools and skills to *only* deposit in our chosen buckets, we find *more than enough time* for everything that is meaningful and important to us. Remind yourself at every turn that how we spend our hours is how we spend our days. As Pulitzer Prize winning author, Annie Dillard, says, “How we spend our days, of course, is how we spend our lives.”

Where to start:

1. Refer to your Life Buckets exercise and make sure you're clear about what 3-5 Life Buckets you are choosing to make deposits in.
2. Open your calendar and take an honest and brutal look at who/what you're spending your hours on? Remember, how we spend our hours is how we spend our days, and as Annie Dillard states so wisely, "How we spend our days, of course, is how we spend our lives."
3. Look at every activity and assess whether it's a match for a Bucket. If parenting is a bucket, do you see time on your calendar that was spent with your child? A harried exchange in the kitchen while telling him to finish his breakfast doesn't count. But 15 minutes in the car with the phone turned off, giving him your deliberate attention does.
4. What pattern are you noticing? Where are you spending a great deal of time? Where are you way below where you want to be?
5. Don't feel bad. None of us live totally balanced lives. The goal is to create more of a match between what truly matters to us, and how much time and attention we are devoting to it. We are not striving for perfection, but rather for progress. You will feel your sense of well being increase simply by getting on the right path, and experiencing a positive momentum.