

MATTMCWILLIAMS

Live with Passion. Lead with Purpose. Leave a Legacy.

7 Ways to Reclaim Your Downtime

Proven Strategies to Create More Margin, Get More Rest, and Take Back Your Life

Confession time: I struggle mightily with downtime. Like many in today's world, I am constantly on the go, whizzing from one thing to the next. Go, go, go. Work, work, work. Can you relate? If so, today I'll share seven ways you can reclaim your downtime.

1. Decide that it is Possible

The first step to reclaiming your downtime is to believe that you can do it.

If you go through life believing that you don't control your own schedule, you will never control it. If you go through each day thinking that you'll never truly have downtime, you won't.

You must first change your vocabulary. Eliminate phrases such as:

"My boss never lets me have any time off."

"My calendar is so out of control, but what can I do about it?"

"I don't know how to rest."

Decide RIGHT NOW that you can reclaim your downtime.

2. Put Downtime in Your Calendar

What gets scheduled gets done whether it's an important task at work or downtime.

Last week, I had a wonderful time with my friend Adam Witmer playing disc golf...in the middle of work day. I've also spent multiple days in the past week playing soccer with our daughter, Aracelli, while I would normally be working.

I was only able to do those things because I blocked the time off in my calendar.

Here's the key: Don't wait to fit your downtime around the other items on your calendar. Take a moment right now to proactively put downtime in your calendar.

3. Measure It

What gets measured gets better.

I've heard that saying so many times in my life and always related it to business. You measure your marketing and it improves. You measure your call volume and it gets better. But what about your downtime?

Do this: Each day, measure your downtime. How long did you intentionally spend during the day not working or doing some other task? And what was the quality of it? Rate it on a scale of 1-10. Measure it and it will improve.

4. Ditch Your Smartphone

I've written before about the benefits of getting rid of your smartphone. I believe wholeheartedly that not having a smartphone is one of the best decisions I've made in my life.

However, you don't have to go scorched earth and start churning your own butter. To reclaim more downtime, just pick certain times to go without your phone (smart or otherwise).

Do this: Pick a time each day (like 7:00pm) and go phoneless the rest of the day. And, more importantly, go phoneless for at least your first hour each day. Then graduate to going phoneless for at least one day per week.

Give yourself the gift of being disconnected.

5. Eliminate Toxic Relationships...Including Your Job

One of the biggest barriers to reclaiming your downtime is other people. Toxic people, including your boss, suck away your time and energy and often make you feel like you must always be on.

Here's a tip: If your boss expects you on call 24/7 (or even close to it), do something about it!

That might mean having a difficult conversation with him. It might mean that you need to leave your job.

But Matt, I can't afford to leave my job!

And you might also need to eliminate some toxic relationships. Here are some posts to help:

- [Silence Your Critics Forever](#)
- [What if Your Critics are Family?](#)

6. Say NO to FOMO

One of the biggest reasons people have little to no downtime is FOMO, the Fear of Missing Out.

I first heard this term from Greg McKeown in his book, *Essentialism*. In it, he talks about the fear that we all have of missing out on something seemingly important.

So we skimp on downtime so that we don't miss the latest Tweet or Facebook post. We miss out on time with our family because another email might have just come in. We are afraid to miss out. So rather than say "YES" to something important, we say "yes" to the little things throughout the day.

Here's the key: You need to acknowledge that you are always going to miss out on *something*. Only YOU get to decide what that something is. Remember, every time you say "yes" to one thing, you are saying "no" to thousands of other possibilities.

Choose what you say "yes" to.

7. Protect Your Downtime at ALL Costs

You must protect your downtime vigilantly and ruthlessly.

Once you put it on your calendar (see #2 above), it does not move unless something much more important takes its place. It's inevitable if you are a high performer in any area that you are going to get increasing requests for your time. But you have to decide in advance what you will say yes and no to.

Over time, you need to get comfortable saying no more than you say yes.

Do this: Practice saying "no" right now. Practice, in advance, how you will respond to certain requests in a tactful and polite, but also firm and confident way.

You *can* reclaim your downtime. But only if you are intentional about it.

How have you been intentional about reclaiming your downtime?