



At this time of the year, it is customary to reflect on the past 12 months and invariably, to remark that we cannot believe that another year has gone by. By this time, we should know that there are no slow years. They all fly by, each year quicker than the one before.

It is important to have this quiet time at the end of the year. It is important to reflect, to ask ourselves whether we really made the best use of the most precious commodity of all: time. Unlike energy, there are no alternative sources of time once we have used what has been allocated to us. Time is not renewable (neither, of course, is energy, but more about that issue next year). If time allows.

Were there things that we could have done better, spent more time on? Were there things that we should have spent less time on, or should rather not have done at all? Did we allow others to consume our time purely for their own selfish benefit, detracting from the little we had for ourselves or our own purposes? Did we really earn our money this year? Did we allocate sufficient time to projects, reports, investigations, whatever, to earn our compensation, or did we try to get by with the least possible and not to be caught out?

Did we spend time to alleviate the suffering of our fellow human beings? Did we do our bit as mere elements of the human race? Did we spend two seconds every morning to say good morning to the security guard or the cleaner or did we just wait impatiently for the boom to open, staring straight ahead? Was staring straight ahead the best use we could make of the two seconds at the gate?

We cannot control time, but we can control what we use it for.

How well did we balance the time we had available to us? Did we allow sufficient for the people close to us, or did we sacrifice that to get better performance ratings at work or to put more money on the table? Every single moment of our lives, we are faced with the decision of what to spend the next hour on. Once it has been spent, it is gone forever. We cannot rewind.

Did we allow enough for ourselves? Did we spend time to read a book, see a movie, go to the zoo, or just lie down and relax? Or did we just drive ourselves relentlessly, chasing a goal someone else made us believe is the most important thing in the world?

We should not be too discouraged if the answers to these questions leave us with a negative rating. We all decide how to spend time based on assumptions of what other people will spend theirs on. Then, in retrospect, it sometimes happens that we miscalculated, and what we thought was important when we took the decision turns out to be wrong in the light of what others did that we were not aware of. That we cannot control.

Maybe the most important thing is to think of the consequences when we decide how to spend the next minute, hour, or day. Very often, what we do for the next period will have influence on the one after. Everything we do is the beginning of a new chain of events and if not controlled, will put us on a road we may not have wanted to be on, and will consume time we may have wanted to spend on something else. The road itself is just a route, and we can always change if we want, or even turn back. But the time taken to do that, can never be returned. It is gone forever.

I wish all our members, our colleagues, and loved ones, a peaceful holiday season. For those fortunate enough to take time off, use it. It is yours, you deserve to have it now.

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