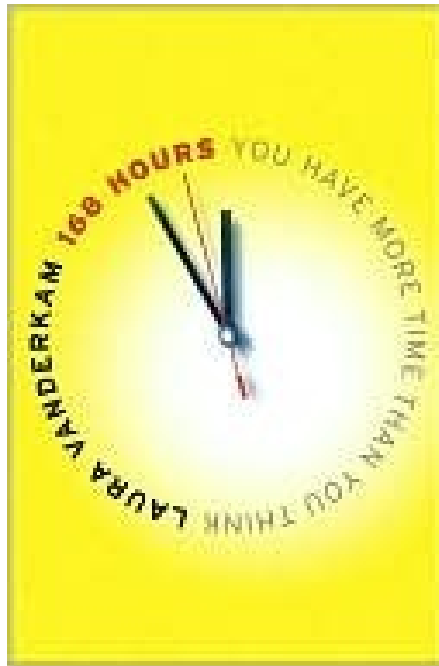




168 Hours: You Have More Time than You Think

Laura Vanderkam

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168 Hours: You Have More Time than You Think Laura Vanderkam

There are 168 hours in a week. This is your guide to getting the most out of them.

It's an unquestioned truth of modern life: we are starved for time. We tell ourselves we'd like to read more, get to the gym regularly, try new hobbies, and accomplish all kinds of goals. But then we give up because there just aren't enough hours to do it all. Or if we don't make excuses, we make sacrifices- taking time out from other things in order to fit it all in.

There has to be a better way...and Laura Vanderkam has found one. After interviewing dozens of successful, happy people, she realized that they allocate their time differently than most of us. Instead of letting the daily grind crowd out the important stuff, they start by making sure there's time for the important stuff. When plans go wrong and they run out of time, only their lesser priorities suffer.

Vanderkam shows that with a little examination and prioritizing, you'll find it is possible to sleep eight hours a night, exercise five days a week, take piano lessons, and write a novel without giving up quality time for work, family, and other things that really matter.

168 Hours: You Have More Time than You Think Details

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cat says

2011 Book 61/100

I picked this book up because I never feel like I have enough time for all of the things that I want to do - or sometimes even for the things that I *need* to do. I expected some discussion of time management and definitely expected help re-arranging my thinking about time. What I did not expect was the complete dismissal of differing income levels and life factors into the author's approach. In the VERY FIRST chapter she admits her class privilege (flippantly I might add) and then totally disregards it for the next 200 some pages. She suggests that we all approach our lives by thinking of them in 168 hour blocks, which conveniently, is a week. Her strategies - start with core competencies, do the important stuff first, use bits of time for bits of joy (I just threw up in my mouth a little as I typed that) are neither new, nor particularly well-written, and most definitely are geared primarily toward the middle-to-high income creative class. I wish I'd skipped this 7 Habits of Highly Effective People-type pabulum and gotten a few of my 168 hours back this week to do something worthwhile.

Mireille says

Was up at 6am and managed to finish a book on time-management before leaving for work. Clearly this means I've incorporated all its lessons, right? (And it compensates for the fact that this book has been on my "currently reading" shelf for six months.)

I got this book in a giveaway and I was excited to read it... until I figured out that I already have pretty good control of my time. I rarely feel like I'm running out of time, or unable to do everything I want to do. Probably because of two things: I only work 30 hours a week (in a job where it's unthinkable to work nights and weekends), and I don't care about housework at all (except laundry, which I generally enjoy).

So the entire section about work had me dragging my feet, and it explains why the book languished for so long. (That, and the fact that I am now a person who dislikes reading paper books.) Maybe I lack ambition or whatever - and I do want to get into some side-hustles, which will probably require some better time-management - but none of it felt relevant to me.

However, once I was finally done with that part, I read the rest in one night. Organizing your life at home, balancing kids, housework and leisure - that was way more interesting to me. I really appreciated that the main message was "housework is useless", because it is! I mean, I do the family's laundry mostly joyfully (the machine does it all!!), and my husband does the cooking and then I clean (half the time), and we share the grocery shopping which I also enjoy. But we got a cleaning person to do the stuff I hated: cleaning bathrooms, changing the sheets, vacuuming, and anything that's "deep" cleaning. She comes every two weeks, and sure, there are dust balls after a week and a half, but I do not care at all. I figure that barely seven of my 168 hours are housework.

I also thought the things about mindfully organising activities to spend time with your kids was interesting. We've gotten into kind of a rut for weekends - watching one or two movies every day. And yes, it's more relaxing, but I feel vaguely guilty, and I know there are things I would enjoy doing way more with my kid, like going to the museum or doing more tourist-y things. It'll help that winter is over, though, as it is a pain.

And I liked the idea of "multi-tasking" by doing things that went great together, like exercising with friends (I already made mental plans to go hiking with my sister-in-law) or cooking with your children.

Still, despite all this good stuff, I found half the book kind of a drag, so three stars only. It also mentioned the "list of 100 dreams" a little too often for my tastes (just seems kind of new-age-y to me). But if you are less awesome than I am at time-managing (ha!) then this book is probably meant for you!

Gabrielle says

As the title suggests, Vanderkam argues that each of us has 168 hours each week and how we use those hours is a personal choice. By using both research, examples of people who've accomplished an incredible amount of success in several major life areas, and her own, personal examples, this book is full of reasons why they excuse "I'm too busy" is really just a cop-out for not making tough, personal choices on how and where and on whom we spend our time.

The best part of the book was Vanderkam's argument that we will be more successful and happy if we focus on our 'core competencies' and outsource the rest of our lives. She does a fantastic job of explaining how certain things in our lives can and should only be done by us and encourages people to hire others to do the things that most of us do, but that aren't part of our core competency skill set (ie: housework, laundry, making huge dinners every night, etc.).

Vanderkam provides time-tracking software on her website for this book. Her argument is that many of us 'waste' time on things that do not enrich our lives. Her statistics on how many hours Americans watch tv and spend online (and don't read to or play with their children) was pretty eye-opening.

When I tracked my own life for a week, I was really shocked at the results. I already don't watch tv to save time and consider myself a professional multi-tasker. My time charts, however, showed that I spent the majority of my days doing housework (so what if I can manage to do 3 chores at once? It's still housework) and returning unimportant emails, which was pretty disappointing to realize as I've decided to limit my working hours during the day so I could spend more time with my infant son. I shared these results with my husband who, too, agreed that we weren't maximizing our core competency areas.

After taking a long, hard look at how we spend our time, my husband and I decided to outsource more of our work to other people, spend more time as a family and give up the desire for a spotless house. This book gets four stars for inspiring me and my family to utilize our time-the most precious resource we have-much, much better.

There are a couple of major flaws with Vanderkam's arguments, however. First of all, this book seemed to be geared towards upper-middle class professionals who can easily afford to outsource their laundry, dishes, housework, etc. For us, it makes sense to pay someone \$50 an hour to clean our home, because we both charge our clients almost double this for our hourly rates. Doing less housework means we can use that time to see clients. But for someone who makes less than that, or is just surviving paycheck to paycheck, some of Vanderkam's 'solutions' would be impractical.

Vanderkam also really glorifies multi-tasking. She 'brags' about how she does yodic poses while the microwave heats up her food and how she works out on the treadmill, reads and returns phone calls simultaneously to save time. I tried doing this for about three days and felt completely wiped out by the amount of mental stress it took to try to crunch everything into the least amount of time possible. There's quite a bit of research that shows that multi-tasking is actually inefficient but Vanderkam conveniently

glosses over that.

Also, a lot of the studies in her book showcase women who "have it all." The woman who runs a multi-million dollar business, is raising 5 kids and hikes every week was one of the people she used as an example of someone who uses her 168 hours very wisely. The whole concept of being a woman who can 'have it all' is actually incredibly destructive and creates an enormous amount of psychological stress. Using time better IS essential to a happy and productive life. But trying to convince women that they should be able to do everything isn't healthy.

All in all, this book inspired me to take a long, hard look at how I spend my time and encouraged me to use my 168 hours wisely. But there are some major flaws in logic that Vanderkam commits to 'prove' her theories about time management that reduce the author's credibility as an expert in this field.

Joe Cassada says

I am, admittedly, a productivity addict - which means I like to read anything and everything on productivity and time management that I can get my hands on (though this hasn't necessarily made me more productive). Vanderkam's book was enjoyable, but I felt it was geared more towards the working mother. Quite a bit of effort is spent in assuaging guilty feelings about untidy homes and take-out food. Her solutions are impractical for those on limited budgets, though she makes a good try at justifying them, e.g. get rid of cable so you can afford to pay someone to do your laundry (what about those who can't afford even cable?), but I admit you can't write a book for everybody.

Nevertheless, she has good principles everyone can benefit from, and the overall message of the book is that we have more time than we think we do. This is true, and a lesson that all income brackets need to heed.

So, even if you're not an upper middle-class journalist and mother, you would probably benefit by reading this book. To that end, I recommend it for all.

Kari says

This author impressed me with her ability to pose questions that made me ask questions in her book "All the Money in the World." I had high hopes for this book, too.

But the book's title is misleading. It's less about thinking creatively about your limited time and more about self-fulfillment. Some may argue that those are the same thing, but I think there's a subtle difference. Trying to make the best use of your time might include doing some things you don't really want to do. Self fulfillment is trying to only do things that fulfill you - which is what the author advocates. She argues that you "outsource, minimize, or ignore" anything you don't like doing, and that you focus your time exclusively on things that you do better than anyone else. I felt this left little wiggle room for exploration or growing underdeveloped skills.

Without meaning to, the author created an ideal person through the people she chose to describe (at length) as having used their time well. I never appreciate one-size-fits-all approaches to anything, but I think the author inadvertently spent 230 pages advocating her own lifestyle by describing people who had achieved her lifestyle. She didn't seem to leave room for the idea that not everyone wanted her life, or that they might have genuine limitations to achieving that even if they wanted it.

There were also several insulting references to families that chose to have the wife/mom stay at home, which admittedly made continuing to read more difficult for me (I'm a stay-at-home mom). I also felt that, while she's clearly devoted to nurturing her children and advocated that strongly, the references made to nurturing one's spouse/partner were a nod-and-wave at best.

It was hard to see myself and my priorities in this book when her's were so different and her opinions on what was best so strong. In "All the Money in the World" I felt she was truly non-judgmental and merely asked questions that got you thinking - I highly recommend that book. Here, she seemed almost arrogant in her assertions of what was best.

Amy says

What a waste of several of my precious 168 hours! Like many people, I struggle with motivation and focus so I'm always looking for wisdom or advice on topics like time management, productivity. This has to be one of the worst how-to/self-help books I've ever read.

First, the book takes its basic premise from the Big Rocks philosophy - In a nutshell, the Big Rocks concept is to picture a jar and, next to it, rocks of various sizes from large to small. You put the big rocks in first, then medium ones, then small ones, then pebbles, then sand, then water. At first, it seems like the lesson is "there's always room for more" but the real lesson is that if you didn't put the big rocks in first, they never would have fit once all the small stuff had been put in. Then, you make the leap from physical big rocks to metaphorical ones, thinking about what in your own life is top priority, really important - and you work on putting your time and energy toward those big rocks.

Instead, she goes with the "core competency" metaphor which really only resonates if you've read a zillion business books (I have, so I was OK but I thought the analogy was we weak because people are not corporations and accomplishments are not finished products off a manufacturing line).

I'll save you several of your 168 hours by summing up her advice:

1. You're not really that busy.

-- Yes her observations are astute. Most people do exaggerate the hours they spend and the hours they have available. Still, the book starts out on a shame-y tone: you are a liar, you are not that busy, you're just too lazy because you are not working all the time. What is true is that most people feel busy because they feel overwhelmed. Even if they don't do everything they're supposed to in any given week, the list of things to be done in a week seems insurmountable. Better advice: look at that list hanging over you. What needs to get done this week? What can you plan to do (and, hardest part, stick to the plan) next week or the week after?

2. Start each week by mapping out how you plan to spend each of your 168 hours

-- This was the only real useful tip in the whole book and it was something I was already doing. If you look at your whole week's schedule and slot in all your Big Rocks first you set yourself up to actually work on them. For example, if you schedule in time for exercise or time to read, you are more likely to do those things vs. waiting for some free time to magically appear (it won't).

3. If you aren't good at something, don't bother trying to get better, it's a waste of your time.

-- She advises that you figure out what you're really good at, do only that and "outsource" everything else forgetting that many of us find joy and accomplishment in learning something new. To a certain extent, if you've spent hours trying to learn how to do/understand something and you're not making progress and you

lack interest, then yes, it makes sense to give up and focus your efforts elsewhere. No one aspires to be Sisyphus. But to say you should only do what you are good at robs us of the excitement of lifelong learning.

4. Figure out what your dream job is and do that.

-- Well, my dream job is to be an astronaut. It's not going to happen. I am in my mid-30s, have no science education and a 15-year career doing something else. Almost every book in this genre makes a similar recommendation. I find it useless. If everyone were doing his/her dream job, would we have janitors? Port-a-potty maintenance crew, etc. Granted, there are some "undesirable" jobs that appeal to a handful of people (i.e. podiatrists, those people who rescue alligators/venomous snakes from human habitats) but most of us aren't working our actual, honest-and-true dream job. Better advice would be how to find meaning in your work, how to stay motivated and focused when the work gets boring (even dream jobs come with a side of tedious tasks), how to move forward, grow and get new challenges/opportunities in your field. Now, if you h-a-t-e your job, that's something to look at but I feel like many of us are working jobs that are medium-ish -- they are not too hard/too easy, they pay enough to pay the bills, there's an ebb and flow between challenge and overwhelmed -- where's the advice on how to make the most of that kind of job? The kind most of us have?

5. Just pay people to do your work.

-- Of all the advice this was the most jerky. Don't do laundry, pay \$35/week to get it done. Don't clean your house, hire a housekeeper. Hire a gardener/ground crew, a nanny, a personal chef. Only do your grocery shopping online. Or buy pre-made meals (and she suggests weight loss companies, of all places, as good sources for a month's worth of food). Pay a personal shopper \$400 for the day to help you pick out clothes at a store that sells really expensive clothes. What? How about: invest a bit of time in figuring out what kinds of clothes look good on you and sticking with a few core, classic looks. And, start with clothes that will last a while, then develop a relationship with a local tailor who can alter clothes to fit you perfectly. Basically, she suggests "outsourcing" all of the domestic chores. WHAT A SPLENDID IDEA. I would LOVE a personal chef, someone to run all my errands, a butler and a maid, to never weed or shovel snow again -- wouldn't you? The reality is, most of us can't afford to outsource all that work. It's more realistic to say, "outsource the thing you hate most." For us, we hire someone to clean our house every three weeks. It's a bit of a stretch but worth it because we both really, really, hate cleaning.

6. Have your personal assistant/executive assistant/secretary make your appointments, manage your schedule, and take care of the little tasks that add up.

OMG. HAHAHA. Seriously? Raise your hand if you have a dedicated assistant? OK, even if you do have an assistant, raise your hand if that assistant is tasked with managing your work schedule/calendar AND your personal schedule/calendar (i.e. haircuts, appointments, etc.). Yeah, didn't think so. Dear Laura Vanderkam: Mad Men is not a show that takes place in the present tense.

7. Friends are a waste of time. So is relaxing.

-- Another gem in this book is that time with friends is time wasted unless you are multi-tasking. Go out to eat with a friend (since you have to eat anyway) or somehow schedule time around something you need to do. Don't knit; she calls that a "cliche" forgetting that perhaps knitting's emerging popularity stems from the fact that people find happiness and a sense of accomplishment in doing it. She recommends watching less TV; I agree with that. She recommends watching no more than one hour of TV per day; I think that's unreasonable. If we are home, we watch Wheel of Fortune, Jeopardy! and an episode or two of something on Netflix. If we're out, we're out; no TV. Over the course of a week there's an OK balance. Her point is that TV gets you nowhere toward your goals. That's true. What she neglects to understand is that the human brain needs a certain amount of downtime.

8. Sleep? Pssht. Be a morning person.

-- Sleep for 7 hours, max. 8 if you're a real lazy-ass. You can sleep when you're dead. Don't "sleep in" on weekends. Wake up earlier and go to bed earlier since "nothing meaningful" gets done after 10p anyway.

Except. Everyone is different. Some people have their best "brain time" at different times. More useful: adjust your sleep schedule around your best hours of the day -- plan to sleep when you know you're likely to have the hardest time staying focused.

9. Using your 168 hours well means what I say it means.

-- And herein lies the whole problem with this book for me. It's all subtext but it permeates all of her advice - every time she says "do this, don't do that (doing that is for suckers)" she makes a judgment about what constitutes a good use of an hour. Incidentally, every time she offers a list of suggested activities (i.e. "read to your child, take a walk, etc.") she almost always throws in something related to religion. Examples: going to church, reading a religious text, Bible study, etc. For me, an atheist, those are a total waste of time. She makes time for church every week but calls knitting "cliched." The effect is that reading this book, I felt judged. I felt like getting "the most" out of 168 hours meant going-doing-ticking off to-do lists and for me, that's just not what life is about. It's about balance. It's about finding meaning in each day.

In short, on this topic, there is no magic bullet. I've yet to read any magic technique that will tell you that you are getting the most out of your life. Only you can decide that. The best advice is simply to think about the kind of life you want and work through the ups and downs to stay on track. Me? I want to be happy, I want to be loved and for the ones I love to know that I love them. I want to have fun. I want to be useful and make the world a bit better. I want time to think and learn and to grow and change as I age. I'm using my 168 hours to work on that and I'm OK with doing my own laundry.

Missy says

I went up and down on this one: yes, helpful in pointing out that priorities matter and just flailing around without thinking about them means you feel like you never have enough time; but, no, admitting that you're incredibly privileged and wealthy doesn't give you brownie points for when you **completely** ignore the effects of that privilege and wealth for the rest of your premise and then insist that **everybody** else is just misguided. It's awesome that you work at home and have a flexible schedule and don't have to factor commute-time in, but HI, THE REST OF THE WORLD MAY NOT WORK THAT WAY. And I say that as someone who enjoys many of those same privileges. (And if reading/listening to music is not one of your priorities, listening to books/music while spending 2 hours each day in the car isn't going to help with that feeling that there's not enough time.)

So, yes, I'm trying to remember to fill up the little bits of time with things that will make my life richer, but I'm not buying the whole "I really do get enough sleep, I just think I don't" point.

Sarah says

This book was just okay for me. While I was very interested in the idea of the book and the concept of thinking of time in weekly 168-hour blocks, a lot of Vanderkam's ideas were completely unrealistic. As a freelance graphic designer, I understand that working from home is not always a piece of cake like some people may think. But I also realize that working from home gives one a more flexible schedule. As a freelance writer who works from a home office, the author seems to think it's absolutely possible for those who work in corporate environments to simply take time off from work for personal reasons. Perhaps some people have that luxury, and that's great. But most people cannot take time off from work to exercise, spend more time with children, or invest themselves in extracurricular activities unless they are willing to give up a day without pay. At one point, the author even suggests outsourcing anything in your professional and

personal life you don't want to do. Again, I'm not sure the average person can afford to hire someone to do the family's laundry simply because it's not an enjoyable task. She even suggests not doing anything at work that is not enjoyable or productive. "First, 'My boss said I had to' or 'My client said I had to' is no more a reason to do something than "I don't have time" is an excuse not to do something else. Everything in life is a choice of whether to accept certain consequences." I'm not sure about Vanderkam, but my boss and my clients are the ones who've always signed my paychecks, and the consequences of not doing what they ask me is unemployment, which would certainly free up for more time for exercise and relaxation, but would not go over so well when I couldn't pay my bills. In addition, her main argument seems to be that 168 hours is plenty of time in a week to get all you need and want to get done, done. However, when she considers 8-hour work days multiplied by five as only taking up 40 hours of a 168-hour work week, she fails to consider the five or more hour commute some people have weekly, the 9-hour workday most people have (whether or not they are able to take a lunch break is a different matter), and the fact that most people take between one and two hours preparing for work in the morning, during which most people don't have time to go on hikes or do fun activities with kids as the author suggests. In reality, the average person, after work, commuting, preparing and eating dinner, and doing housework, really only has around three hours of leisure time a day (weekday.) That adds up to around 15 hours for exercise, leisure, book clubs, and other extracurricular activities, but let's be honest, on paper that might seem like a lot, but in real life, it feels like seconds.

Ciara says

this book was published before vanderkam's book about personal finance, [all the money in the world](#), but i only heard about it while i was reading the money book. i enjoyed the writing style & some of the concepts in [all the money in the world](#), & living on a fixed income, the topic of time management is probably more relevant to me, so i decided to check this one out too.

vanderkam says that she was inspired to write this book after reading a feature in "real simple" magazine in which readers were asked what they would do with an extra 15 minutes a day. the answers were things like, "relax in my hammock," "do the dishes," "read fiction," etc. vanderkam got to thinking about how unlikely it is that people would actually use a bonus 15 minutes any more wisely than they use the 24 hours they already have, & she decided to look into how people actually do spend their time, versus how they think they spend their time, & offer advice for how people can make the time to lie in their hammocks, wash the dishes, & read fiction.

this inspired a conversation between me & my partner. i asked him what he would do with an extra 15 minutes a day & he said, "tidy the house." we decided that we would each spend 15 minutes a day tidying up. as a result, our house is almost always pristine, like something from a magazine. it was eye-opening to realize how little time it really takes to do something that seems so insufferable but ought to get done anyway.

probably my favorite part of this book was where vanderkam contrasts the reports of how people think they spend their time versus how they actually spend it. i used to have a friend who claimed that, between her actual outside-the-house job & a small side business that she ran to help make ends meet, she worked an average of 80 hours a week. & yet, she didn't come close to keeping traditional 9-5 hours (more like 11-3), & she spent enormous chunks of time sitting on her porch smoking weed & watching TV. i kind of wanted to buy a copy of this book & leave it on her doorstep. i'm sure she felt as stressed out as someone who really did work 80 hours a week, but that was probably a function of guilt over having such terrible time management skills.

there are little exercises sprinkled throughout the book so that the reader can track their own time

management skills & identify areas where they might like to make changes (such as watching less TV to make more time for reading fiction). my main criticism is that vanderkam occasionally goes off on bizarre tangents that didn't really make a lick of sense. i'm thinking specifically of where she wrote about maintaining her running routine throughout her pregnancy & how she was back in her pre-pregnancy jeans a week after giving birth. good for her & everything, but it read more as bragging than as helpful info that was relevant to the book. there's kind of a lot of that kind of thing in the book, like, "i had such a good day today! i took my kid to the museum & went to choir practice, but still had time to query three new editors about freelance work & write for five hours!" cool? maybe save it for your diary.

Anna-lisa Rich says

I admit that my review might not be the best as I stopped reading this book. It's a book about how to be more responsible about your time and use it wisely however I couldn't help feeling like I was wasting my time reading it. I can figure out how to use my time wisely on my own. I also felt the author pushed her own opinions way too much; to the point where anyone who said they didn't have time to do certain things was a complete idiot. As a mom, who actually spends time with her child, the first few pages turned me off from the book. Sure, any mom can have all the time that they want to do things if they can afford to have their child in daycare for 8 hours each day and then jet off somewhere in the evening leaving your child with yet another babysitter. I liked some of her ideas and it's true, if we use our time wisely then we do have a lot of time, however, taking the time to read this book is wasting your 168 hours/week!

Leftbanker says

A few things you will learn from this book:

- Every menial task in your life should be farmed out to flunkies.
- If you aren't a creative genius perhaps you could be a professional flunky. See if www.flunkies-are-us.com is available.
- Put down the Twinkie, turn off the professional wrestling program on TV, pick your big ass up off the sofa, and start training for a marathon. Why aren't you training for a marathon already? All the cool people are running marathons every 2-3 days.
- Your friends are mostly losers so ditch them.
- Your children need to be treated as commodities so that you can rank yourself alongside other hyper-successful people. If your offspring disappoint you drop them off at the adoption agency and start over.

I would usually give a book like this one star as it could be boiled down to fit on a 3X5 index card but instead was bulked out into book-length form by adding dozens of examples of perfect people who "have it all." I've never met anyone remotely like that. And, yes, I get it that we have 168 hours in a week and that I could do more with my time. On the other hand a lot of the really "successful" people I know bore the shit out of me and have nothing to say that I want to hear. Someone talking to me about their training for a marathon or other work-out routine stuff is at the bottom rung of conversation; it's on the same level as talking about bodily functions.

Sarah says

I truly hate to stop reading a book halfway through, but by the time I got to the chapter about "new household economies", I couldn't shake the feeling that the author has no comprehension of the realities of an average American life. I am a "housewife" myself, with some modest dreams of having a freelance creative career but no clue how to fit that in with my responsibilities as a wife and mother. Sorry, I can't outsource childcare just because it's not a core competency (really, it's not!). Good for you if you can or if your preschool age kids aren't endlessly distracting and needy, but my kids just don't respect my meticulously curated calendar like Vanderkam's kids obviously do. As for her suggestions that perhaps it's kosher to make your own work schedule or ditch work meetings that don't benefit your own personal agenda- I'm speechless! Before I became a homemaker, I did work 50 hours a week for a Fortune 500 corporation. In my line of work, I came to work when my boss said, stayed as long as I was scheduled to work, went to whatever meetings I was required to attend and thanked the Good Lord that I was employed. I gave an extra star just because I did get some useful ideas from the first 150 pages, but I'm going to save the other 2 hours from my 168 to bake a loaf of from-scratch bread with my four year old. And it'll be infinitely more enriching (and delicious) than finishing this elitist time-micromanaging manifesto.

Ann says

Wow, do I have mixed feelings about this book.

The first couple of chapters were insightful and interesting and useful. Many other parts of the book had great ideas and fascinating case studies.

But there were huge sections where her suggestions and reasoning were based on underlying assumptions that I just don't agree with at all. If she doesn't come right out and say it, she strongly implies that a woman who doesn't have a career aside from mothering and home-making is wasting her time and life. I don't agree. Several other things she writes about here just rubbed me the wrong way. For example, I'm not sure how bragging about fitting into your pre-pregnancy jeans one week after your baby was born fits into this book. And I suspect that once the author actually has school-age children, she might not be so gung ho about feeding them school lunches to save time. She claims the hot lunch offering in school are now "healthy." Hmm.

More importantly, though, I just have to say something about the value of unstructured, unplanned time where mom is not focused on the children but is physically present. Ms. Vanderkam would have us believe that if we aren't engaging with our children then we might as well not be with them. This is so false. It's also false to say that we should outsource all our housework so that we can spend quality time with our kids. I'm not terribly good at it, but what about having your work time BE the quality time? How about showing your kids that grown-ups and families have work and that work--whatever honest work it happens to be--is worthwhile. I'm not saying it's wrong to outsource any and all work. Sure, hire the neighbor boy to mow your lawn. Whatever. I'm just saying that you'll actually be doing your kids a disservice if you structure your time so that all time you spend with them is recreational or even educational. All play and no work makes Jack a very lazy boy, as I see it.

And this is all not to mention that I think she just emphasizes career too much. For anyone. Of course, that reflects her audience, I suppose.

Now, having said all that, I am still thinking about this book, and I finished it a few weeks ago. I am thinking about how I use my time and why. I am thinking about things on my "dream list" that I want to make time for. I am thinking about whether I spend any quality time with my children at all or whether it's just quantity. So I suppose her book, despite many irritating elements, is successful.

Rachel (TheShadesofOrange) says

4.0 Stars

Despite the imperfections of this book, I have re-read (or re-listened to it multiple times) so clearly it hits a chord with me.

The book is primarily targeted at wealthy mothers that are either self-employed or have significant flexibility over their working hours. Since I am none of the above, I couldn't relate to a good portion of this book. Given the nature of my work, I cannot rearrange my work hours or delegate my tasks away. Also, the author's advice of outsourcing household chores, like cooking and cleaning, isn't feasible.

However, I liked the concept of this book enough to reread it as an audiobook. As a data nerd, I love the idea of tracking and analyzing my time. There is some great advice in this book that anyone can use, regardless of their personal situation. I particularly liked the sections that focused on identifying areas of leisure & fitness. I want to be more purposeful in choosing activities that invigorate and recharge me.

Best Advice:

- Instead of saying "I don't have time for that", say "that's not a priority"
 - make a list of activities you can do in 10 & 30 minutes
 - align seeing friends with other activities, such as eating meals or exercising
 - set aside blocks of time for activities that are important to you
 - make time some form of exercise (2.5+ hours a week)
-

Amy Brown says

This is a helpful book if:

- you have bags of money,
- you like processed food, and
- you believe in quality time over quantity time with your kids.

Vanderkam argues that you can have it all, all at the same time. She says it's easy to find the 20-30 hours a week that you absolutely require (she asserts) to develop and maintain a worthwhile career. What you need to do is give up (or outsource) housework and stop watching TV. You'll only have a couple of hours a day to spend with your kids, but that's okay, because you can plan exciting and enriching activities to do in those hours. No just slouching around hanging out with your kids. (Goodness knows, they might start talking to you about their lives if you do that, and what a waste of time that would be.)

A lot of the advice in this book is sound. At it's core, Vanderkam's advice is that you should spend your time mindfully: don't waste work time in pointless meetings or reading endless emails, and don't waste "leisure" time staring at the television. At work, do the things which only you can do. At leisure, do things which are important to you and which fill you up. Wring value out of every minute of your day; spend your time in ways which are congruent with your values.

I think this is fantastic advice. Where Vanderkam goes astray is when she advises you to spend time in ways which are congruent with *her* values, and her lifestyle. She says OF COURSE you can afford to outsource

house cleaning and laundry, you know why? Because Americans spend bags of money on air conditioning and cars and coffee and other things which Laura Vanderkam thinks are a waste of money. She doesn't address whether someone with no car and no air conditioning and \$50 000 of debt should be spending money on a house cleaner -- she simply brushes the question aside by asserting that you're probably already wasting a bunch of money.

Other things she asserts: Kids are actually underscheduled and have too much spare time. (Citation needed, but not proffered.) You should schedule exciting dinner outings with your kids a couple of days a week. (A terrible idea if your kid has an early bedtime, or is fond of routine.) You can make a "homecooked" dinner in fifteen minutes by opening a few jars and taking advantage of pre-prepared (and more expensive, but that's okay because you can afford it) foods.

Vanderkam's advice directly conflicted with advice from two other books I read recently. I'm fairly sure the authors of *Your Money or Your Life* would not advise me (specifically) to buy convenience food and pay twenty bucks a load for someone else to do my laundry. And I know Yoni Freedhoff, author of *The Diet Fix: Why Diets Fail and How to Make Yours Work*, would not approve of Vanderkam's convenience food dinners.

If you haven't done any reading on mindful time management, then I suppose this book is a decent place to start, as long as you remember that Vanderkam wrote it for people **exactly like her**, and take her advice with a pinch of salt. But you'd be better off reading *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity* or *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* and working those systems into a lifestyle that's meaningful for **you**.

One last note: a crucial part of time management, for me, is actually energy management. I have times of day when I am bright, alert and focused. Those times are great for writing or editing or budgeting. I have times when I'm logey and tired. Those times are fine for doing laundry, cooking, baking, or just hanging out with the kids playing Minecraft or watching *Downton Abbey*. Vanderkam doesn't address energy at all -- she seems to assume that any time of day or night is eligible for productive work -- but pay attention to it. I've discovered it's absolutely pointless for me to try and work after 8:00 pm because everything takes twice as long, and I make mistakes that I waste time fixing the next morning. Better to properly rest, or do less-intensive jobs to free up mornings for brain work. Your mileage may vary, so pay attention to your own rhythms.
