



[CHAPTER 2]

Creating Healthy Boundaries

Like most people today, Lynn has a smart phone. Unlike most people, Lynn has adopted a strong set of healthy boundaries with its use. “Technology is supposed to be a servant to us, yet ironically, I see so many people today becoming slaves to technology, especially with their cell phones. Not me. Life is too short to be a slave. I turn my cell phone off unless I intend to make a call. We lived for eons without cell phones, but you would never know it in this day and age. If I don’t answer my phone, please leave a message... or call back. It’s that simple,” she says without any hint of sarcasm.

If you have ever been a parent, (and even if you have not) you have heard of the developmental stage of childhood called “The Terrible Twos.” It’s the age when infants, upon finding their voice, use the word “NO!” with great, perhaps incessant freedom. It’s at this moment in time when parents begin to lay down the law. Indeed, we first learn about healthy boundaries from our parents: *Eat your vegetables. Do your homework. Brush your teeth. Be in bed by 8:30 p.m.* It’s every child’s job to push these boundaries, and it’s every parent’s job to hold firm. Boundaries, however, are not just for kids. They are for everyone!

Healthy boundaries provide structure, and quite often, stability in our lives. Consider one of the smallest parts of your body, the cell. All cells, from muscle tissue to blood cells, have cell membranes. Like a city wall that protects the

“Healthy boundaries provide structure, and quite often, stability in our lives.”



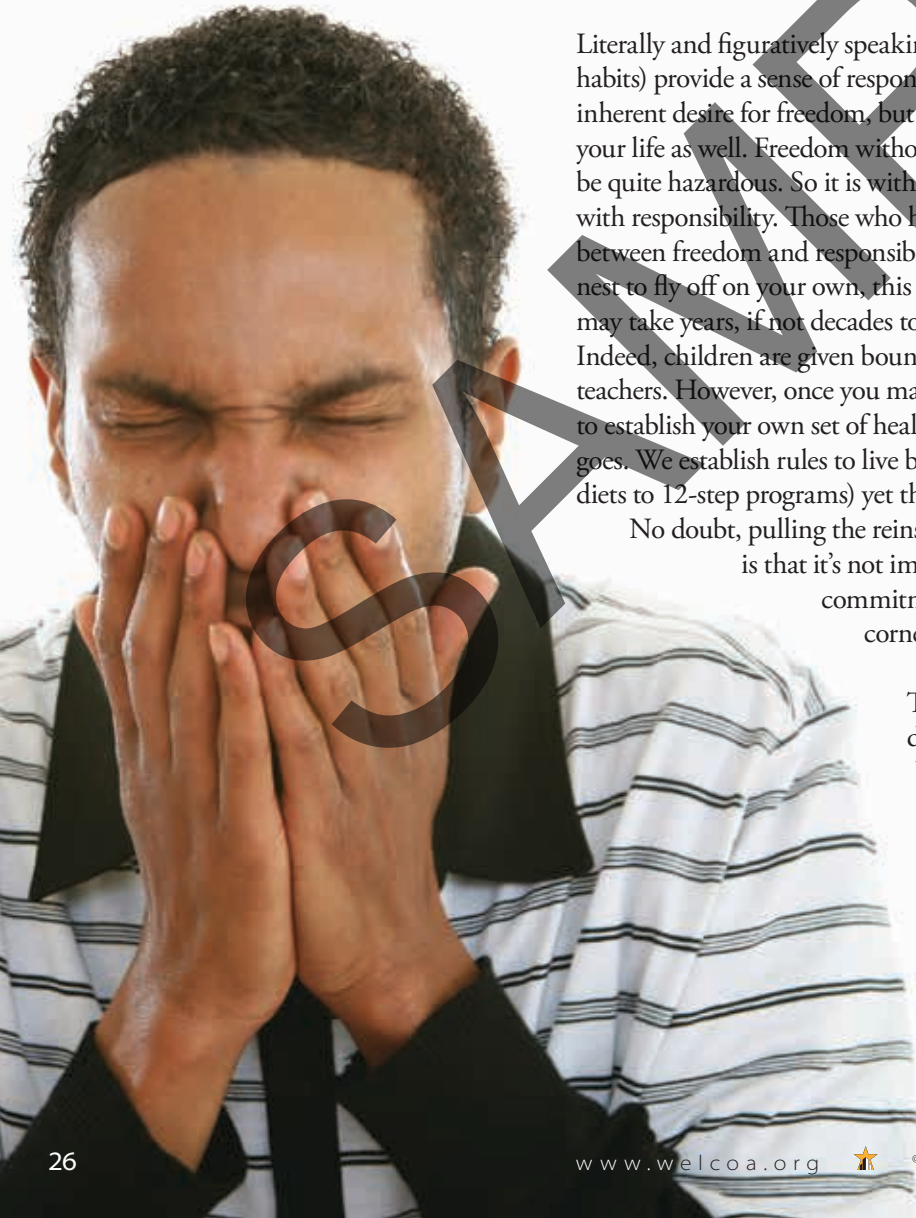
“The good news is that establishing new boundaries for health and optimal wellness can begin today.”

mighty castle and cozy hamlet inside, boundaries offer protection and stability. Cell membranes regulate what comes in and what goes out. Without cell membranes, complete havoc would ensue and ultimately destroy the cell's integrity. Rivers have banks for much the same reason. When river waters exceed their banks, all hell breaks loose. The same can be said for our lives: Without healthy boundaries to guide our daily behaviors, all hell breaks loose, whether it's addictions, chronic disease, compromising relationships, financial distress or all of these things together (YIKES!). Could the reins of your life be pulled in a little? If so, you are not alone. In fact, you are in excellent company. Poor health boundaries are rampant in American culture. Poor health boundaries not only erode the foundation for a good life, they can shake the ground the foundation rests upon like a high magnitude earth quake. The good news is that establishing new boundaries for health and optimal wellness can begin today. Everyone needs healthy boundaries, and these boundaries need constant attention. Exercise 2.1, *Creating Healthy Boundaries*, invites you to examine your life through the lens of healthy boundaries, and where necessary, make a new attempt at regaining a foothold of personal stability in your life.

Literally and figuratively speaking, healthy boundaries (also called healthy habits) provide a sense of responsibility; they not only provide balance to the inherent desire for freedom, but they also provide a great measure of integrity to your life as well. Freedom without responsibility is dangerous; ultimately it can be quite hazardous. So it is with all aspects of life: Freedom must be balanced with responsibility. Those who have been to college can attest to this struggle between freedom and responsibility. Regardless of when you leave the proverbial nest to fly off on your own, this process of establishing healthy boundaries may take years, if not decades to perfect as you navigate the course of your life. Indeed, children are given boundaries by their parents, grandparents and even teachers. However, once you mature into adulthood, you become responsible to establish your own set of healthy boundaries. We all know how this story goes. We establish rules to live by, (from those New Year's resolutions to fad diets to 12-step programs) yet they are all too easily ignored, and then forgotten.

No doubt, pulling the reins in our lives is no small task! The good news is that it's not impossible either. It takes determination and commitment. Simply stated: Healthy boundaries are the cornerstone to the good life.

The term “healthy boundaries” can be distilled down to this simple message: Appropriate behavior; *Cover your mouth when you sneeze, don't use your cell phone at the cinema, or drive only when sober.* Some healthy boundaries are imposed upon us. Take for example people who become allergic to wheat products and then can only eat “gluten free” foods. Most healthy boundaries, however, are less dogmatic, yet equally important, for they



become necessary steps in which to live a life of optimal wellness. Moreover, healthy boundaries offer a means for resiliency when we meet the unexpected. Indeed, healthy boundaries become the behaviors we invest in to ensure a healthy life.

It's fair to say that most of our major health issues today result from poor health boundaries. Lack of exercise, poor nutritional habits, sloppy sleep habits, unwise financial habits; the list is nearly endless... and the results can be nothing less than catastrophic. Technology in the information age has added a whole new spin to poor health boundaries. Exercise 2.2, *Master or Slave?* is a survey that offers a look at the newest health issue: Screen addictions.

We have all heard the expression, "Too much of a good thing is bad." Ageless wisdom reminds us (repeatedly) that moderation is key to a good life. Hence, one of the keys to the good life is establishing and practicing the art of healthy boundaries. Simply stated: Healthy boundaries provide a means to pull the reins in on our lives and gain a sense of balance also known as empowerment. Sage advice reminds us to do so before irreparable harm is done to the mind, body or spirit. Boundaries can be both confining and liberating. It all depends on your attitude, which ironically is also considered a healthy boundary.

Whining: The First Sign Of Poor Boundaries?

Jenny is a whiner. She whines about everything, from the traffic driving to work and the rising cost of groceries to photocopier jams and relentless evening telemarketers. To hear Jenny whine would make you think that she has a lot of stress in her life (most of which she creates herself) and that her life is horrible. By all accounts, Jenny, like most Americans, has it extremely good, yet you would never know it listening to her complain about how bad things are. Jenny is not alone in this common, but less than desirable behavior. Experts in the field of sociology suggest that ironically, in a nation of abundance, whining has become a national pastime. In psychology circles, whining is known as "victimization" where the person complaining wears the invisible, but recognizable label of "victim" on their forehead. Simply stated, whining is a form of grieving—grieving the loss of an expectation. And while grieving is considered healthy, even this behavior needs healthy boundaries. Prolonged grieving in the form of whining gets old fast. As the expression goes, "Once a victim, twice a volunteer."

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Constant whining is not only a sign of grieving, it is also a sign of poor health boundaries—in this case emotional boundaries. Indeed, people grieve when they feel violated, and justifiably so. Having healthy boundaries won't stop all whining, but undoubtedly, they will empower you to feel a better sense of balance in your life. Exercise 2.3, *Cheese With Your Whine?* offers a new habit to curb an old pastime. Please give it a try.

I Can... And I Will: Creating Healthy Habits

It's not enough just to have healthy boundaries. These personal guidelines for healthy living have to be honored by putting them into practice—each and every day. Like leaning to play an instrument or perfecting your golf swing, every behavior takes practice, and lots of it until it becomes second nature. This means that the first few attempts may not look successful. In fact, you may fail miserably, and that's OK! No one ever said changing behaviors was easy. Practice and more practice is the key until it becomes a routine, woven seamlessly throughout your day. Moreover, experts in the field of behavior modification state with certainty that a slip here and there is part of the behavior change process. This we do know, to establish and protect your healthy boundaries requires will power, assertiveness, high self-esteem and some good time management skills. Here is a closer look at each.

1. Will Power: There Is A Way!

Will power is the unique alchemy of motivation, inspiration and self-control. It is as much taking action toward a goal as it is inaction; preventing yourself from doing something you might later regret. Research on willpower and self-control underscores the importance of positive self-talk, also known as “positive affirmations.” Common sense reminds us that negative self-talk (ego fear-based thinking) becomes self-defeating. It was will power that empowered civil rights activist Rosa Parks to take her seat on that bus in Alabama. It's also will power that enables you to go out and exercise or turn off the laptop or smart phone and spend some quality time with your family. It's important to remember that guilt only decreases will power. So, if you find that tomorrow your will power is weak, don't beat yourself up. Start where you are and progress from there. Exercise 2.4 *Damn, I'm Good!* outlines a strategy for using positive affirmations to strengthen your sense of will power. Good luck, you can do it!

2. Creative Assertiveness

In simple terms there are three types of behaviors; 1) Passive; being walked over (this promotes feelings of victimization, hence not recommended). 2) Aggressive; walking over people (also known as bullying and NOT recommended). 3) Assertive; holding your ground, diplomatically. When it comes to creating healthy boundaries, the clear choice is the assertive path. To be assertive means to be firm, but polite. It means communicating your boundaries, and not swaying to criticism when others (those who demonstrate passive or aggressive

“Practice and more practice is the key until it becomes a routine woven seamlessly throughout your day.”

behaviors) mock you for holding your own ground. Being assertive means being empowered to say, “No” if saying “Yes” means violating a healthy boundary or promotes feelings of victimization. Learning to say no politely takes practice—sometimes lots of practice. Being successful with your healthy boundaries will take assertiveness. And there will be those people (like little children) who will test your boundaries, sometimes to no end. Be flexible, but hold strong.

3. Giving Self-Esteem A Boost!

Will power is important to maintaining healthy boundaries, but self-esteem is equally essential. In a stress-filled world overflowing with negativity, having a deflated sense of self-worth is all too common. Moreover, the advertising industry is great at making everyone feel insecure about their weight, hair, social status and other aspects too numerous to mention, yet equally bothersome. Self-esteem is more than just a sense of self-worth. Like will power, self-esteem is a unique alchemy of confidence, courage, humbleness and self-acceptance. Experts in the field of psychology have noted that five aspects of self-esteem are essential to promote a healthy life. They include: healthy role models, a sense of uniqueness, a sense of empowerment, a strong social support group and calculated risk-taking. While levels of self-esteem can fluctuate from day to day, there are some simple ways to boost your self-esteem. In doing so, you strengthen your center of gravity to withstand the prevailing winds of uncertainty, and become resilient should you slip and fall. Remember, there is a fine line between being perceived as confident and arrogant. Choose your behaviors wisely. Exercise 2.5, *Boosting Your Self-Esteem* invites you to explore the aspects of self-esteem in more detail, and steers you in the direction of a good boost!

4. Time Management

There is a funny proverb that states, “When all is said and done, there is a lot more said, than done.” The fourth component of healthy boundaries involves making the time to practice your healthy boundaries. Many of our best intentions never see the light of day because we don’t make the time to commit to a new schedule of healthy behaviors. As the expression goes, “To know and not to do, is not to know.”

Today, we find ourselves living in a culture of distractions where making quality time to do things is greatly compromised. An abundance of choices and options is great, but it can also be overwhelming and quite distracting. And as great as all of our technology gadgets are, they can also become time robbers (e.g., searching Google for one thing can easily become an hour of web surfing). If you are like most people, most likely you are feeling some sense of time-crunch these days. The topic of time management is quite extensive, yet the basics are essential to acknowledge with regard to establishing healthy boundaries. If we don’t make the time, our best intentions go to waste. To get a better sense if you are feeling the squeeze, consider completing the survey in Exercise 2.6, *Time Crunch Questionnaire* as an awareness

“When all is said and done, there is a lot more said, than done.”



“The road to the ‘Good Life’ may have a few potholes and detours, but it also has some amazing vistas, rest stops and plenty of roadside attractions, all of which are worth experiencing.”

tool to help calibrate your mind for new and improved healthy boundaries. In no uncertain terms, time management has become more than simply making a list of things to do. It now includes removing and deleting things that steal your precious time. Exercise 2.7, *Practicing The Art of Subtraction* invites you to examine the things in your life that may need to be edited out.

Without a doubt, healthy boundaries are essential for a healthy life; the good life. The following is a quote from a colleague who recently took some time to implement a few healthy boundaries in his life. In his words:

I was blessed with a pretty good life, but like most people I took it for granted. Some might say I lived on the edge. I lived by the expression, “If you are not living on the edge, you are taking up too much room.” The only problem with living on the edge (as long as I did) is you can fall off, crash and ultimately hurt yourself, which I did. Some people call it rock bottom. I call it a face plant in reality. My world crumbled (over a period of several years, actually) and I could barely find the pieces to put myself back together. But I did. Slowly. One day at a time, one piece at a time. I have learned to become resilient. Today I eat less, exercise more and get a lot more sleep. I spend less time in virtual reality and more time in actual reality. I have a lot fewer friends, but better quality friends. I’ve learned that you can say “no” and people will still like you. I have also learned that it’s true that everything works best in moderation. Life isn’t a sprint. It’s more like an ultra-marathon relay. It’s essential to pace yourself. At 40 years old, I have learned to pace myself. In doing so, I have learned that I can enjoy life today with the promise that I will be around tomorrow. If I can learn this lesson, anyone can. My life isn’t perfect, but whose is?! What I can say today is that my life is excellent, and you cannot ask for more than that.

The road to the “good life” may have a few potholes and detours, but it also has some amazing vistas, rest stops and plenty of roadside attractions, all of which are worth experiencing. The following exercises are intended to help you gain some awareness around some specific habits and behaviors that might need a little grooming. The following chapters explore the four basic components of wellness in more detail. Within each chapter you will find additional exercises, surveys, questionnaires and awareness tools that will help serve as a guide for healthy optimal living.



[EXERCISE 2.1]

Creating Healthy Boundaries

We are living in an age in which the average person has very poor boundaries in his or her life. Technology may be a factor, but it's not the only reason. People bring their work home while at the same time problems from home invade their professional lives. It seems that almost everyone has poor financial boundaries, with the average person carrying well over \$5,000 annually in credit card debt. People think nothing of bringing their cell phones into restaurants and movie theaters, and what begins as just an hour in front of the television ends up being an entire evening. Poor personal boundaries result in feelings of being overwhelmed, annoyed and victimized—all of which contribute to a critical mass of stress.

Healthy boundaries require an insight about what's appropriate in each and every setting in which you find yourself. In essence, you need to discover what boundaries you need to create to maintain a sense of personal balance. Next, healthy boundaries require courage to assert your boundaries so that they are not violated. Finally, healthy boundaries require willpower and discipline so that you can establish better structure and stability in your life.

I. List four areas in your life that you feel have weak boundaries (or perhaps no boundaries). Examples might include finances, alcohol, technology, or television watching.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

II. Now, list four healthy boundaries that you would like to create in your life to bring about a sense of balance. Then add a few words about what you can do to have these boundaries honored.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

[EXERCISE 2.2]

Master Or Slave: The Internet Addiction Survey

A new social addiction has appeared on the scene, and it has ruined friendships, marriages, grade point averages and boardroom meetings. By some accounts, the Internet, Facebook updates, text messaging, emails, YouTube, Skype, Pinterest, video games, gambling, Instagram, Wikipedia, and online shopping have magnified the human need of acceptance; the need to feel needed. Eating is a basic human drive, but a food addiction is problematic. Like eating, access to the Internet as a public utility has become a part of everyday life, yet like a powerful black hole, one can become lost to the point of derailing one’s life and those in one’s immediate orbit including family, friends and co-workers. Are you a master or slave to the Internet? The following questionnaire may help you answer this question.

1 = Rarely/Never	2 = Occasionally	3 = Frequently	4 = Often	5 = Nearly Always
1. One of the first things I do each morning is go online to check text messages, emails, Facebook updates or other websites of interest.				
2. Even though I might just check in briefly with social media sites, I end up online for a lot longer than I plan, sometimes for hours.				
3. Although it might be considered illegal, I have been known to text while driving.				
4. I check Facebook or Google Plus comments and emails several times an hour each day.				
5. I become fidgety when I cannot pull out my smart phone or iPad and get online to check messages, text messages, or social media updates.				
6. It’s quite common for me to pull out my smart phone or tablet during a conversation with friends and check something online... then quickly check favorite social media sites.				
7. I post updates on Facebook and then repeatedly check to see who “likes” and comments on what I post, as well as frequently comment on other postings.				
8. I am easily distracted surfing the Internet, sometimes forgetting what I originally went online for.				
9. I begin to feel agitated, perhaps even depressed when I don’t have access to my smart phone (e.g., dead battery, dead zone, etc.) for long periods of time.				
10. In the course of a typical day, I end up spending more time online than real-time contact with friends, family and peers.				
11. I tend to get aggravated when I get interrupted while online.				
12. Online activities have a priority over work and many home responsibilities.				
13. Life without social networking, texting and web-surfing would be extremely boring, even unhappy for me.				
14. I quickly check email, Facebook or other social networking sites before meetings, appointments, etc.				
15. I have a hard time turning my cell phone/smart phone off.				
16. Friends and family comment about my online use.				
17. I become defensive when people comment on my use of the Internet.				
18. My sleep time has decreased since smart phones, tablets etc. have come into my life.				
19. I watch TV, listen to the radio or do other things while online.				
20. The last thing I do before I go to sleep is check text messages and social media site updates.				
				TOTAL SCORE >

Key: Score your answers by adding the points for each question for a grand total. The higher your score, the greater your level of addiction and the issues and concerns associated with Internet use or what is now commonly called, screen addictions.

Please use the following scale to help measure your score.

SCORE

10-39 points = Indicates normal online use. Keep in mind that normal is not always healthy.

40-69 points = Indicates that your Internet activity leans in the direction of Internet addiction and healthy boundaries with Internet use are a good idea.

70-100 points = Indicates that the amount of time you spend online is associated with addictive behaviors and thought should be given to changing this behavior with the creation and practice of strong healthy boundaries.

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SAMPLE

[EXERCISE 2.3]

Cheese With Your Whine? A Healthy Catharsis

First and foremost remember this: It is OK to whine... just not all the time! As the saying goes, “You can visit Pity City, you just can’t live there.” But boy do people try! Simply stated, whining is cathartic; it’s a healthy emotional release. But just like you wouldn’t sit on the toilet all day (that’s another kind of release) neither should you whine all day, every day. This exercise invites you to put a healthy boundary on whining. Keeping in mind the premise of balance, the first half of this exercise invites you to whine, followed by the second part that invites you to empower yourself with a different (positive) perspective. Some people may call this the Pollyanna—rose-colored glasses view, but in truth, it offers perspective to what can become a myopic view of your life. As the expression goes, “Every situation has a good side and a bad side. Each moment you decide.”

PART 1: Write down a problem, concern, issue or dilemma that you are facing; feel free to complain. Explain how this makes you feel. Then explain your expectation of how things should be or how you wish they were.

PART 2: There is always a positive side to a bad situation. Always! It’s time to put on some rose-colored glasses and take a different perspective. Using the same issue or problem you used in Part I, take a moment to write down something positive about this bad experience, even if it’s that you have learned never to do it again.

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[EXERCISE 2.5]

Giving Your Self-Esteem A Healthy Boost

Self-esteem is thought to be comprised of five components: Uniqueness, Role Models, Empowerment, Connectedness, and Calculated Risk-Taking. With this in mind, let's take a look at your level of self-esteem with respect to these five areas. Try to answer the following questions as best as you can.

I. Uniqueness: List five characteristics or personal attributes that make you feel special and unique (e. g., sense of humor, being a good cook, a passion for travel):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

II. Empowerment: List five areas or aspects of your life in which you feel you are empowered:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

III. Mentors & Role Models: Name five people (heroes, mentors, or role models) who have one or more characteristics that you admire and wish to emulate or enhance as a part of your own personality. Please describe the person and what trait or traits they possess.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

IV. Connectedness: Friends and family are now thought to be crucial to one’s health status. To have a sense of belonging is very important in one’s life. Who (or what) gives you a sense of belonging? Please describe each in a sentence.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

V. Calculated Risk-Taking: List five good risks that you have taken in the past year that you feel have augmented your sense of self-worth and courage.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

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SAMPLE

[EXERCISE 2.6]

The Time-Crunch Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions as you are (not how you would like to be) regarding your time management skills. Add up the numbers you circled and check the questionnaire key to determine your level of time management skills.

	1 = Rarely	2 = Sometimes	3 = Often
1. I tend to procrastinate with projects and responsibilities	1	2	3
2. My bedtime varies upon the workload I have each day	1	2	3
3. I am the kind of person who leaves things until the last minute	1	2	3
4. I forget to make or refer to "to do" lists to keep me organized	1	2	3
5. I spend more than two hours watching television each night	1	2	3
6. I tend to have multiple projects going on at the same time	1	2	3
7. I tend to put work ahead of family and friends	1	2	3
8. My life seems to be full of endless interruptions and distractions	1	2	3
9. I tend to spend a lot of time on the phone talking to friends	1	2	3
10. Multi-tasking is my middle name. I am a great multi-tasker	1	2	3
11. My biggest problem with time management is prioritization	1	2	3
12. I am a perfectionist when it comes to getting things done	1	2	3
13. I never seem to have enough time for my personal life	1	2	3
14. I tend to set unrealistic goals to accomplish tasks	1	2	3
15. I reward myself <i>before</i> getting things done on time	1	2	3
16. I just never have enough hours in the day to get things done	1	2	3
17. I can spend untold hours distracted while surfing the Internet	1	2	3
18. I tend to not trust others to get things done when I can do it better myself	1	2	3
19. If I am completely honest, I tend to be a workaholic	1	2	3
20. I have been known to skip meals in order to complete projects	1	2	3
21. I will clean my room, garage, or kitchen before I really get to work on projects	1	2	3
22. I will often help friends with their work before doing my own	1	2	3
23. I tend to spend time on less important, but more satisfying things at the cost of being efficient	1	2	3
24. I end up wasting a lot of time with technology and gadgets	1	2	3
25. I often find it hard to get motivated to get things done	1	2	3
	SCORES >		
	TOTAL SCORE >		
SCORE			

75-51 points = Poor time management skills (time to re-evaluate your life skills)
50-26 points = Fair time management skills (time to pull in the reins a bit)
0-25 points = Excellent time management skills (keep doing what you are doing!)

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[EXERCISE 2.7]

Practicing The Art Of Subtraction

Does your life feel cluttered with too much stuff? Is your garage and basement filled with stuff that you haven't used or seen in years? Are there people in your life who are so emotionally needy that when you see them, you want to run and hide? Are there things in your life that at first seemed to simplify things and now they seem to be complicating things? If so, you might want to consider engaging in the Art of Subtraction (also known as editing your life). Please read through these items and answer the questions to help identify where you need to pull the reins in so that you don't feel victimized by your own behaviors.

I. Clutter: Walk through your house or apartment and make a list of five things that fall in the category of personal clutter (this can include equipment, clothes, books, or anything lying on the floor). Once you have made this list, collect the things and consider giving them away to the Goodwill or some other charitable organization.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

II. People: Are there people in your life who take up time rather than contribute to your quality of life? Take inventory if you have any "friends" who seem to be a drain on your emotional energy. The next question to ask yourself is: Do you drain other people's energy? Do you give as well as take in your relationships and friendships?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

III. Simplicity vs. Complexity: We tend to bring things into our lives out of both interest and fear. What things are in your life right now that may have begun out of interest, but now you are ready to let go of? Another way to phrase this question is to ask yourself: What things in your life tend to add complexity rather than simplicity? Once you have identified three things, begin to ask yourself what you can do to subtract these things to bring your life back into balance.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____