

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION—

“TAKE BACK YOUR TIME” HANDBOOK

Part 1: Overwork in America

1. How much more or less do you feel you are working compared to 5 years ago, or 10 to 20 years ago? Why are you working more or less?
2. Do you feel the labor saving devices you use on the job are giving you more free time? Why or why not?
3. Do you consume more or less than you did 10 years ago? Do you feel that that if your rate of consumption had remained stable over the last 10 years, you could now be working less?
4. Do you get enough sleep? Are you sleeping less than you used to?
5. Has your company downsized and increased your workload?
6. Are you ever required to put in mandatory overtime? How much and how often?
7. Do you think the U.S. could still remain competitive in the global market place if we had more vacation time? Why or why not?
8. Should paid vacation time be mandated by the US government? Why or why not? How much vacation would be appropriate?
9. How much paid vacation do you get? Could you be more productive on the job if you had more time off? Can you give some examples of why you might be?
10. Are you in a managerial position and not being paid for the overtime you work?
11. Keep a time diary for a month to see how much you work.

Part 2: Time is a Family Value.

1. Do your children ever complain before going to a scheduled event (sports, lessons, etc)?
2. Are you comfortable with the amount of activities your children participate in?

3. What structured activities did you participate in as a child? Are your children involved in more or fewer structured activities than you were?
4. What types of unstructured play do your children engage in? Do they get outside often?
5. How frequently does your family eat dinner together?
6. Do you take a family vacation each year? For how long?
7. What do you think about the amount of homework your kids do?
8. What are your feelings about electronic games, television and computers in the lives of children?
9. Do you feel you spend enough time with your pets?
10. Have your pets ever shown signs of anxiety?
11. How much television do you watch? Do your children have televisions in their rooms? Have you ever tried to go without TV for a week or a month? What happened?

Part 3: The Cost to Civil Society.

1. Do you feel the Gross Domestic Product is a good indicator of the health of our society? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel you are wasting time when you aren't "accomplishing" something?
3. Do you feel that because of your cell phone and computer, you are never really off work?
4. Is it a patriotic duty to shop? How much time each week do you spend shopping? Should stores be open less often? Why or why not?
5. Has the size of your home increased to accommodate your possessions?
6. Do you feel your citizen input matters?
7. Do you volunteer in your community? How often? Does the amount you work make it hard for you to volunteer?
8. Do you feel you have enough time to be politically active?

9. Should citizens be given Election Day off?
10. Do you see a connection between overwork and people's ability to affect change in the political issues they find important?
11. Should legislation be introduced to limit working hours?

Part 4: Health Hazards.

1. Do you take time to eat properly? Rest? Exercise?
2. If proper diet and exercise can improve all aspects of your life, shouldn't they be a high priority?
3. What are the barriers to finding the rest, exercise and nutrition you need?
4. Do you have to keep a job you hate to keep your health care?
5. Do you try to reduce your stress level to promote better health? If so, what do you do?
6. Stephen Bezruchka argues that inequality leads to poorer health and more overwork. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Part 5: Environmental Consequences

1. Do you give thought to your purchases and their environmental impact? What criteria do you use in purchasing? Do you have time to think about the environmental costs of the goods you buy?
2. Do you take the time to recycle? Why or why not?
3. Do you buy mostly new or used items? Do you frequently buy throwaway items and "convenience" items?
4. Could you change your commuting habits and bike, carpool or take the bus?
5. What do you think your ecological footprint is? Find out by visiting www.redefiningprogress.org

Part 6: Historical and Cultural Perspectives

1. Do you feel cheated by the unfulfilled promise of reduced labor with labor saving machines?
2. Could the 30 hour workweek movement ever be regenerated today? Why or why not? Would it be a good idea?
3. How can we balance work and leisure on a national scale? Would we have to live like hunter-gatherers to have more time? Why or why not?
4. If Kellogg's could institute a 30 hour work week using 1930's technology, why haven't we been able to reduce our working hours in the 21st century?
5. What steps could you take in your life to give yourself a weekly day of rest? Is keeping the Sabbath important to you?

Part 7: Taking Back Your Time

1. Are you at a point in your life where you have enough in a material sense? Could you trade some money and stuff for time? How much?
2. What can you do to reduce your spending and debt?
3. What steps would you need to take to reduce your working hours?
4. What other steps can you take to reduce time pressure outside of work?
5. Do you have friends who can help you simplify your life?

Part 8: Workplace Solutions

1. How do you think your boss would react to the idea of job sharing? Is it something that would interest you?
2. Could you visualize your life to make your work a more balanced and rewarding part of it?
3. Can you visualize changing your work schedule to have greater work/life balance?
4. Can you find ways to control or manage your work-time so you don't have to take work home?
5. Have you chosen work based on the salary level it provides or on how you feel towards the work?

6. Do you allow yourself time to think about who you really are and how you will shape your future?
7. Would working part time as you near retirement age be beneficial to you? What are the pros and cons?
8. Could you benefit from a sabbatical? In what ways would it be beneficial or detrimental to your career? Is there any way you could have one?
9. If you needed to, would you be able to take an unpaid leave to care for a sick child, relative or yourself? How beneficial is the Family and Medical Leave Act?
10. How do you see your life and work if viewed through the “work and personal life lens” described in chapter 25?
11. Do you feel valued and respected by your employer? If so, do you feel your loyalty to the company is increased?
12. Would you take a pay cut to have shorter work hours?
13. Could you be more productive if you were on the job less?
14. Are you a member of a union? Does your union work for shorter hours or only for higher pay? How important do you think unions have been in the struggle for shorter hours and how important are they now?
15. How can shorter work-time benefit businesses? Do you know examples of businesses that really promote work/life balance? How do they do it?

Part 9: Rethinking Patterns of Culture

1. What criteria do you use when choosing which foods to buy?
2. Does the Slow Food movement appeal to you? Is there a chapter in your town?
3. Do you feel you have time to prepare a good meal from scratch?
4. Are the amenities in your neighborhood within walking or biking distance? Can they be made more so?

Part 10: Changing Public Policy.

1. If shorter working hours have been successful in Europe, what are the reasons the US doesn't adopt similar policies?
2. Have you spent time in Europe? What did you feel about the quality of life there?
3. Do you agree with the idea of tax credits for contributions to non-profits outlined in chapter 29?
4. Brainstorm your own ideas for legislation that could give Americans more time?
5. Do you think career breaks and job rotation as outlined in chapter 28 could work in the America?
6. How could we switch to an economy which values quality of life over quantity of dollars?
7. Do you support your local "living" economy?
8. In your opinion, what is an economy for?

**ADD YOUR OWN QUESTIONS BASED ON
READING THE BOOK. BE SURE TO GIVE
EVERYONE A CHANCE TO EXPRESS HIS OR HER
OPINIONS.**