

Time Sighs When You're Having Fun

An Excerpt from Creating Time by Marney Makridakis

The perception of time is the quintessential human paradox. We often want to escape ourselves and lose track of time, and yet when we become fully aware of the gift of time, we are more present and in touch. As mentioned in chapter 1, I see a solution in *becoming less aware of time but more aware of the present moment*. This leads us to a certain state of bliss that often is described as “losing track of time” or “timelessness.”

We all have had moments when we lost track of time or became unaware of the time passing. There are several ways to describe such experiences. In 1964, Abraham Maslow coined the term *peak experiences* to explain those moments when we are fully engaged with something outside ourselves. In his book *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi popularized the concept of *flow*, a mental state in which we are fully immersed in what we are doing through energized focus, full involvement, and success in the process of the activity.

During peak experiences or flow activities, it's not so much that time goes faster, but that time seems to dissolve altogether. We've all heard that time flies when we are having fun, but when I've been in the flow state, I have felt that time neither flies nor stalls...instead, time *sighs*. When we have those experiences of time sighing, everything feels different. The example that sticks out for me occurred several years ago, when we had just moved to Hawaii and my husband had returned to the mainland to finish packing up our home there. I spent two months in a new home, on an island where I didn't know anyone. It was a unique opportunity for inward exploration and reflection, and it triggered the most prolific period of creativity I'd ever experienced. With few responsibilities or obligations, and with no sense of linear time, I did little else but paint wildly colorful canvases around the clock.

I can remember a sensation of blurriness in the air as I was painting, as if the edges of my experience were fusing into something else, perhaps the very borders of time fading away. Though I've never felt it again to quite that extent, I still recognize this gossamer-silk sensation during times when I am in a creative flow; I've even experienced it a few

times as I've been writing this book. I don't know what it means, and I can scarcely even describe it; I just know that everything takes on a different quality when we are in the flow, when time is sighing. When I asked students to describe their experience during the flow state, they shared some of the following impressions:

- “Colors become brighter.”
- “I feel a buzzing sensation inside.”
- “I feel really, really awake.”
- “There's a bit of sparkle in the air.”

As a child, I remember, I fantasized about what it would be like to live inside of a snow globe. I think this fantasy was rooted in growing up in Texas and longing for snow. And yet, even then, perhaps part of me longed for the still perfection of a glitter-filled utopia and the metaphor for timelessness that it provides. In those sparkly little dome-shaped wonderlands, there is only the present, only the now, only *that* world. Nothing else matters — appointments, responsibilities, negotiations. Everything is flowing, shimmeringly encapsulated in the moment, encased in a *flow* globe.

In real life, we can call it *flow*, *peak experience*, or *losing track of time* — different labels to describe the same type of experience, an experience that we all seem to crave. These timeless moments align us with the truisms of who we are. They unify us with the world on which we spin. And they provide our souls with deep evidence that outside of the obvious mortal limitations we have on this planet, the perception of time is completely subjective, and just as it was when we were children, time is therefore always under *our* control instead of the other way around.

Marney K. Makridakis is the author of **Creating Time**. She founded the Artella online community for creators of all kinds and the print magazine Artella. A popular speaker and workshop leader, she created the ARTbundance approach of self-discovery through art. She lives in Dallas, Texas. Visit her online at <http://www.artellaland.com>.

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