



Wellbeing Insight

Balancing the Unbalanceable

I've been thinking a lot about time lately – not the hours and minutes that fill a calendar, but the deeper question that sits underneath: What does it mean to live a balanced life? And perhaps more importantly, what does balance even look like for each of us?

Oliver Burkeman, in his quietly provocative book *4,000 Weeks*, reminds us that the average human lifespan amounts to roughly that number – “absurdly, terrifyingly, insultingly short,” he says. His message is not to panic, but to be freed. We will never get through the to-do list. We will never be fully “on top of things”. And yet, life still invites us to live fully.

Burkeman urges us to release the myth that perfect control of time is possible. Instead of wrestling with time, he suggests we build a better relationship with finitude itself. As he writes, “The real measure of any time management technique is whether it helps you tolerate the discomfort of confronting your limitations.”

How refreshing. How confronting. How true.

At My Manifesto, we often reflect on how easily we can slip into living on autopilot – doing, responding, producing – without pausing long enough to ask the deeper questions. One of our earliest and enduring beliefs is that “to know, to care, and to believe in yourself are three of the greatest gifts you can receive.” That knowing includes recognising the shape and edges of your time, and honouring what is deeply important to you.

A personal manifesto becomes a quiet companion in all this. It doesn't add more tasks to your day. Instead, it clears the noise. It reminds you of who you are at your best, and what you genuinely want to bring alive in your limited, precious time.

Perhaps this is what Burkeman is pointing toward too. When he writes about accepting our limits, he is inviting us back into choice – intentional, values-aligned, grounded choice. And choice, when expressed thoughtfully, is the essence of a personal manifesto.

In Chapter 19 of our book we wrote, “How lucky are we to have people to care for, things on our to-do lists, and a manifesto that we have personally created to guide and inspire us?” This line has been echoing in my mind. Lucky indeed – if we remember to pause long enough to notice.

So, in the spirit of noticing, here are four gentle experiments you may like to try in the week ahead. They are small, human-sized invitations – not to do more, but to choose more intentionally.



Four Practical Time Experiments

1. The One-Thing Hour

Choose one meaningful thing – just one – and devote a quiet, uninterrupted hour to it. Not multitasking. Not “catching up”. Just doing what matters, slowly.

2. The Joy Audit

At the end of a day, ask yourself:

What lifted me today? What drained me?

Over a week, patterns will appear. They are signposts to wiser allocation of your time.

3. The Gentle No

Say no to one non-essential request. See how it feels in your body. Notice whether space opens – not just in your schedule, but in your spirit.

4. The Micro-Pause

Once a day, stop for 60 seconds. Breathe. Notice. Reorient.

A minute may seem laughably small, yet it can reset the whole trajectory of a day.

None of us will ever balance our time perfectly. But perhaps balance is less about precision and more about alignment – returning again and again to what we value, what we cherish, and who we wish to be.

Your time is limited.

Your choices matter.

And as our book gently reminds us, “There is nowhere for us to arrive at, but there is a way to be.” May the way you choose to be this week bring you clarity, peace, and a renewed sense of possibility.

Go well.