



LifeMapSM

"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

July 2013

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[The Gift of Solitude.](#)

Many editions of LifeMap have focused in some way or another on relationships with other people: relationships with bosses, co-workers or subordinates, relationships with spouses, children or other family members, or relationships with friends and social contacts. In this edition we're going to steer an opposite tack and look at reestablishing a relationship with ourselves.

In our culture a very common measure of our psychological health is how effective we are in managing our interactions with other people. But what is often overlooked is how successful we are at making time available for ourselves: for us to be alone and to use that time in our own best interest. This is not that simple a distinction but one that we need to

It is said that a major distinction between western and Eastern philosophies is the former's focus on *doing* versus the latter's focus on being. I think this is the reason that solitude often gets confused with loneliness. Loneliness refers to unhappiness due to a lack of companionship. Solitude is the state of *being* alone - which can be quite energizing, nourishing and enjoyable.

Does it make you antisocial or misanthropic if you enjoy your solitude? Absolutely not. Becoming completely reclusive or socially isolated is certainly indicative of a problem but making time to be alone, to listen and sort through the thoughts buzzing around in your brain is one of the most healthful things you can do for yourself. Given today's 24/7 electronic connectivity we are at the beck and call of whomever reaches out to us whenever they chose to do so: bosses, customers / clients, colleagues, family, friends. Yes, there are some clear benefits to this technological development but many folks have privately shared with me that we are losing something as well and that is some time to be alone.

Paths Forward

The Myth of Time Management. No one can manage time. No one. In this life we all get the same amount of time: sixty seconds a minute, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and no one ever manages to get more or less. The issue is what we choose to fill our time with. You can argue that with commuting, work, family, meals, laundry, pets, chauffeuring duties, and more there is no time left for yourself. If this seems true for you then I must advise that it is a choice you have made - and often at your own expense. If work is taking too much of your time then that is the problem, not time management. If household members are not pulling their weight then that is the problem, not time management. If you spend hours every day shuttling from one event to another then the problem is over-scheduling, not time management. Trying to squeeze in two hours of solo down time a day is probably undoable. But how about five or ten minutes? Or a half hour? Or one hour twice a week. Are you worth it? Do you deserve it? If so, it may be time to start pushing back on the demands that others make on you.

Pick One Small Thing. If you truly believe there is no time for you to be alone with yourself, your thoughts, or your dreams, try this: pick one small thing to stop doing so you can use that time for yourself. Try washing the car every other week, not weekly. Mow or rake the lawn every ten days instead of weekly. Buy extra socks, undies and towels (or ask Santa for them) and skip one extra laundry load a week. Cook double meals once a week, freeze one and skip cooking one night the following week. There are limitless ways to do this. If you choose to find time for yourself, you can do it. I suggested above that you may have to re-train others in the demands they make on your time. Here the re-training is focused on you.

Intellectual Development. Solitude is essential for

developing one's intellectual talents. For example, solitude is helpful in the cultivation of abstract thought and problem solving abilities - often predictors of executive performance. Time alone with your thoughts will stimulate your creativity, improve your concentration, will help you develop your imagination and resurrect long-delayed dreams and hopes.

The Distraction Society. We are surrounded by things that prevent us from paying attention to ourselves: radio, T.V., the Internet, voice mail, e-mail, I-pods, cell phones, etc. We turn many of these distractions on automatically whenever we enter a room or a vehicle. If you don't plan on giving it your full attention, turn it off. (Research has shown that fiddling with your phone or even with the radio while driving is as dangerous as texting. Is that message really as important as your very life or the lives that you may destroy?) Instead tune in to yourself. You will begin to find bits and pieces of quiet time and solitude for psychic repair and emotional recuperation from a taxing day or stressful event.

Loss and Recovery. Solitude can promote emotional healing during illness, mourning or stress. It can provide an opportunity to connect with one's spiritual or religious beliefs. A church experience is often about connecting with a congregation of fellow-believers but a prayer in solitude is an opportunity to connect directly and personally with God.

Make A Space. It can be very helpful for you to create a small sanctuary for yourself. A favorite chair, a spot in your yard, a corner of your bedroom where you can be, for those precious minutes, away from noise, distraction and interruption. A small fountain, a plant, a c.d. of nature sounds or soothing music can help create this environment. One person I know utilizes an out of the way stone bench on the route of her daily walk for 5 minutes of "me time".

Make It Happen. If you want some quiet, alone time you can have it. But only if you choose it and decide to make it happen. To help you get started use a journal or private note card to jot down a list of all the places and moments you can be alone (e.g. in the car, in a waiting room, on a walk, first thing in the morning, before going to bed). Grabbing a bit of "self" time here and there is fine but as the list grows see where you can carve regular time (start small) out of your schedule for yourself. Doing something regularly will help you to make it a habit. Making these "quiet appointments" with yourself is a gift only you can give.

Dig Deeper. If you would like to explore this topic in more depth or would like to hear what others are thinking about achieving some solitude or distinguishing it from (and dealing with) loneliness I have read and recommend:

[Solitude: Seeking Wisdom in Extremes: A Year Alone in the Patagonia Wilderness](#) by Robert Kull (Aug 4, 2009)

[Last of the Donkey Pilgrims](#) by Kevin O'Hara (Jan 19, 2010)

[Solitude: A Return to the Self](#) by Anthony Storr (Sep 27,

2005)

[Celebrating Time Alone: Stories Of Splendid Solitude](#) by Lionel Fisher (Apr 28, 2001)

[Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection](#) by John T. Cacioppo and William Patrick (Aug 10, 2009)

[Freedom from Loneliness: 52 Ways To Stop Feeling Lonely](#) by Jennifer Page and Pam Rhodes (Jul 30, 2012)

LifeMap is about creating the life *you* want. An essential part of this process is to look within which will heighten your awareness of what is most important to you.

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<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/speakingschedule.html>

Resources

· Are you or someone you know job hunting or thinking about it?

The best, concise, all-round job changing guide available. Revised Edition [Winning Job Interviews](#) by Dr. Paul Powers.

In this easy-to-follow, step-by-step book, Dr. Paul Powers demystifies job interviewing, explains why the process actually favors the job hunter, and shows how you can dramatically improve your interview skills. Packed with solid, practical information and laced with both humor and "kick in the pants" motivation, *Winning Job Interviews* is the book you wished you had before your last interview... and is mandatory preparation for your next one!

· Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?

Or know someone who is? Order your copy of [Love Your Job! Loving the Job You Have, Finding A Job You Love](#) by Dr. Paul.

<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/booksandarticles.html>

Have an issue or question you'd like Dr. Paul to address in a future edition? Send an email to the email address list below.

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