

A.C.A.L.M.E.R.M.E

**M IS FOR MINUTE-BY-
MINUTE**

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When we've experienced emotional trauma, chaos, and disruption, time-pressure can feel explosive. In our minds we've set a timer, and the tick-tick-tick is deafening. We'll do everything and anything to avoid being late, wasting time, and missing our often very tight deadlines. Time pressure can cause procrastination, it's why we meltdown, it's why we have panic attacks.

As our fear-based memories of being shamed, criticised, and excluded kick in, our brain hits the brakes on regulated responses. We're thrown into survival mode, and logical thinking goes out the window. Our Wounded Inner Child grabs the wheel, floors the accelerator, and panics.

How different would your day look if instead of being a perfectionistic people-pleaser and rushing to beat the clock, you slowed down?

Imagine doing everything minute-by-minute, calmly, consciously, and with self-trust, breathing deeply as you go. As you structure your tasks into achievable segments you have time to take regular breaks. You're thinking logically and breathing deeply through the urgency projected onto you by other people.

You notice that you're not only getting more done but you're being more efficient. You're accomplishing everything in a way that gives you a sense of genuine achievement.

Part of winning our emotional war is learning how to take our time. Ticking off tasks at our own pace without overwhelm makes the tasks more achievable and helps us build our distress tolerance and resilience skills.

When our priority is to meet other people's emotional needs before we meet our own, we tend to do things as quickly as possible to avoid the looming possibility of being shamed and criticised. Even now, when I sense someone's impatience, I can momentarily start to feel nervous about what's coming next. I gently reassure my Wounded Inner Child and interrupt any rising panic. Then, my conscious adult-self soothes my fear-based memories with reassurance that we've got this, easy-peasy.

Go at your own pace.

I used to pride myself on how quickly and efficiently I could do things. I'd find shortcuts for everything and achieve impossible demands just so I could be thought of as indispensable. I even stopped taking holidays because my boss (Pinocchio) panicked when I wasn't in the office. Co-dependent-fear-fuelled-people-pleaser? Me? Well,

maybe then, but not anymore! Instead of the praise and approval I'd expected all I got was severe burn-out. I sobbed my way, exhausted, through two months of sick leave.

For people like us, people who have experienced emotional trauma, being put under time pressure is a recipe for overwhelm and disaster. As we heal more of our emotional history, rushing to get things done will become less important as we become more aware of the self-punishing expectations behind our motivation.

Important to remember: if you show signs of people-pleasing perfectionism there will always be 'personality types' who will take advantage of your need to please. All this work you're doing **will help you** recognise these personalities *and* manage them.

When we're emotionally exhausted and time-pressured events kick-in, they could eventually lead to an emotional breakdown - and that's serious.

- If you work at a job where time pressure is 'a thing' and it's affecting your mental health, then find another approach to your job - or find another job. Start aiming for good enough standards and drop the perfectionism.

- If time-pressure is the nature of your job, then decide if you're cut out for the work.
- Is time-pressure created by a lack of organisation, leaving everything to the last minute, time wasting, or procrastination? If so, you might be able to save your job and yourself if you can restructure your methods and look for a more logical and self-empathetic approach to your work.

Whatever's causing your time-pressure you must find an alternative to the energy-zapping demands you're facing. You may even love the feeling of indispensability (I get it), but is the price you pay for that momentary glow worth it? I'd say not.

When we're under time-pressure we must tell ourselves: 'my needs matter.' If we need a break, a drink, a sandwich, we must take the time to meet our needs. When we take care of **ourselves first**, we gain the awareness and perspective to take care of **someone else next**. You've heard the saying about putting on your own oxygen mask first? Even if you're in charge of a child you need oxygen first *before* you can help them.

When you're feeling the burn from time-pressure, STOP. Become aware of yourself and your surroundings, return to the present moment, calm your wandering thoughts,

take a few deep breaths. Don't make any further decisions until you have a clear mental space to think from. Being rushed or rushing yourself into decisions means you're likely to decide something for the wrong reasons and regret it. Step back and step away from what or who is overwhelming you. Do so with dignity, no drama. Exit if you need to, then reset, and reward.

Time-pressure is a trigger for an emotionally exhausted person. It looms over us like a demon, cloaking us in shame and judgement. We believe if we can't meet our deadlines we'll be humiliated, criticised, and dismissed - at least that's what our wounded inner child believes. Our Conscious Adult Self however is wiser to the shenanigans of the pushy people who tell us, 'it must be done now!' even if that pushy person is us...

Time is precious, **but it never needs to feel pressured.** We are the bosses of our time; we're lighting the way and slowing down to get more done.

CHALLENGE IT TO CHANGE IT JOURNAL PROMPTS

MINUTE-BY-MINUTE

- What needs to change in your life to allow you to slow down and live minute-by-minute? Think about your job, your studies, your relationships, your day-to-day habits.
- What time commitments or expectations create a feeling of stress just thinking about them?
- What time-pressured obligations are you still carrying that you don't even want anymore?
- Whose approval, whose expectations, whose deadlines are you still trying to meet - and why?
- What have you learned about living minute-by-minute?

When we're moving through our day minute-by-minute, we have awareness. When we practice awareness, we are conscious. Our focus is here, now, with the task right in front of us. Our Conscious Adult Self is at the wheel, and our Wounded Inner Child is asleep in the back seat. Bliss.

Whatever's waiting to be done will just have to wait while we focus on this moment, this task, this breath. If we allow the future to distract us, we suspend our conscious awareness. We slip back into survival mode meeting

someone else's needs to avoid confrontation and chasing a false sense of safety.

When we slow down, we become mindful of our choices, feelings, and thoughts. When we live minute-by-minute, we stay present, we stay calm, and most importantly we stay empowered.

Minute-by-Minute is our eighth step.