



Free Up Time to Pursue Your Purpose

What would you do with an extra hour every day – or even a dozen more hours every week? Would you sleep, rest, do nothing? Enjoy more creative projects? Build a side business? Write your book? Go back to school? Get clear on who you are and what you truly yearn for in life?

The good news is: **You can free up more time. It's going to take work, but it IS possible.**

Having worked with hundreds of coaching clients, I've designed a unique process to help.

I'm Caroline Garnet McGraw, a coach who helps recovering perfectionists pursue their own path and start doing what they're meant to do (rather than getting stuck in "supposed to"). I'm also the author of *You Don't Owe Anyone: Free Yourself from the Weight of Expectations*.

Before I had kids, I had already freed up my time quite a bit. After transitioning out of my traditional job, I became a successful entrepreneur. I loved setting my own schedule, but overwork and overload crept in. At one point, I had 75 coaching calls per month on my calendar!

Then I had two beautiful kids in two years, in the middle of a pandemic, with minimal outside support, while running my business and being our family's primary breadwinner. Plus, we faced a whole bunch of major injuries and serious illnesses in that season too.

At a certain point, I simply could not keep working the way that I had been working. In times past, I'd almost always been able to override my fatigue, summon strength, and carry on. (Perhaps you can relate?) But at a certain point, "I will just work harder" breaks down.

I'm telling you this for two reasons. First, if you have a real crisis cluster going on: Please, go gently on yourself. You may want to save this exercise for when you are out of survival mode.

But the moment you do have a little more bandwidth, pick it up again. Coming out of crisis is a great time to do this exercise. Crises shake us up and show us our true priorities. They give us an opportunity to get off the hamster wheel of self-sacrifice and stop wasting our precious time.

Because how we spend our time is how we spend our lives.



But how do you free up time to pursue your purpose? Let me tell you about a dream I had.

In the dream, I saw a bunch of hopping bugs under my kitchen table. I tried to squash them, but they just kept multiplying. (Do you ever feel that way, like you just get one thing done and three more things sprout up? Like no matter how hard you work, you're always running behind?)

How do you actually free up your time when the stuff to do keeps multiplying?

In my dream, I turned away for a second, then suddenly, there was a large golden snake under my kitchen table! The snake started eating the bugs...and interestingly, the bugs stayed gone.

And I thought, *Well, I no longer have a bug problem, but now I have a snake problem!* At that moment, the snake locked eyes with me, then rushed closer. Terrified, I woke up with a jolt.

When I decoded the dream, though, I realized: the bugs represented all the nagging tasks and to dos that wouldn't go away. And the snake was a golden circle, representing that which is sacred.

Time freedom is not about racing faster to squash the bugs. Rather, time freedom is about locking eyes with that snake. It's about recognizing, clarifying, and protecting the sacred.

In that spirit, I created...

The Sacred Circle Exercise

1. Write a list of the 3-5 things that are most sacred to you in your life for the next 9 months.

What is in your Sacred Circle for the next 9 months? Be specific. Don't just write "my family" or "my job." Write actual names and projects, and limit yourself to a handful. My Sacred Circle currently includes: my health and well-being, my very closest people, and exactly two work projects.

If it feels tough to narrow it down, consider these questions:

What would your twenty-plus-years-into-the-future self advise you to include?

If you had a clean slate, with no expectations, what would you value most?

If you were absolutely free and no one would be mad at you, what would you prioritize?



2. Write at least a full page of things that are on your to do list and calendar.

It doesn't have to be everything, but get as much down as you can.

3. Go through the pages asking yourself: What is in my Sacred Circle, and what is not?

You may find that the majority of items are not. No judgment. We are actually not going for perfection here. Our lives are complex, and we are going to have a few things that are not in the Sacred Circle. Fine! But we are going to make some changes. Which brings us to the fourth step ...

4. Go through your pages and list the top 3-5 items that are costing you the MOST in terms of time and energy and money that are not in your Sacred Circle.

Really look at your big-ticket items here, rather than obsessing over the small stuff. Most of us tend to fixate on tiny tasks, while ignoring huge time-sucks.

Before I did this exercise, I was convinced that I had to get "cat care" off my plate. But that took just 30 minutes a week, and I had some work commitments taking up to a dozen hours a week! These projects paid well, but they were taking lots of time and energy away from my Sacred Circle.

5. Do the work to get some of this costly stuff off your plate.

To start, use the four B's by Martha Beck: Bag, Barter, Better, and Batch.

Bag = Get rid of it! Leave the gig, phase out the gathering, stop going to the class or club.

Barter = Trade for something you like better. I find grocery shopping overwhelming, but filling out forms is satisfying. My husband thinks grocery shopping is easy, but he hates filling out forms.

Better = Make it more fun. My best friend and I both dislike laundry, but we like talking on the phone every week. So we talk and do laundry at the same time; it's so much better that way.

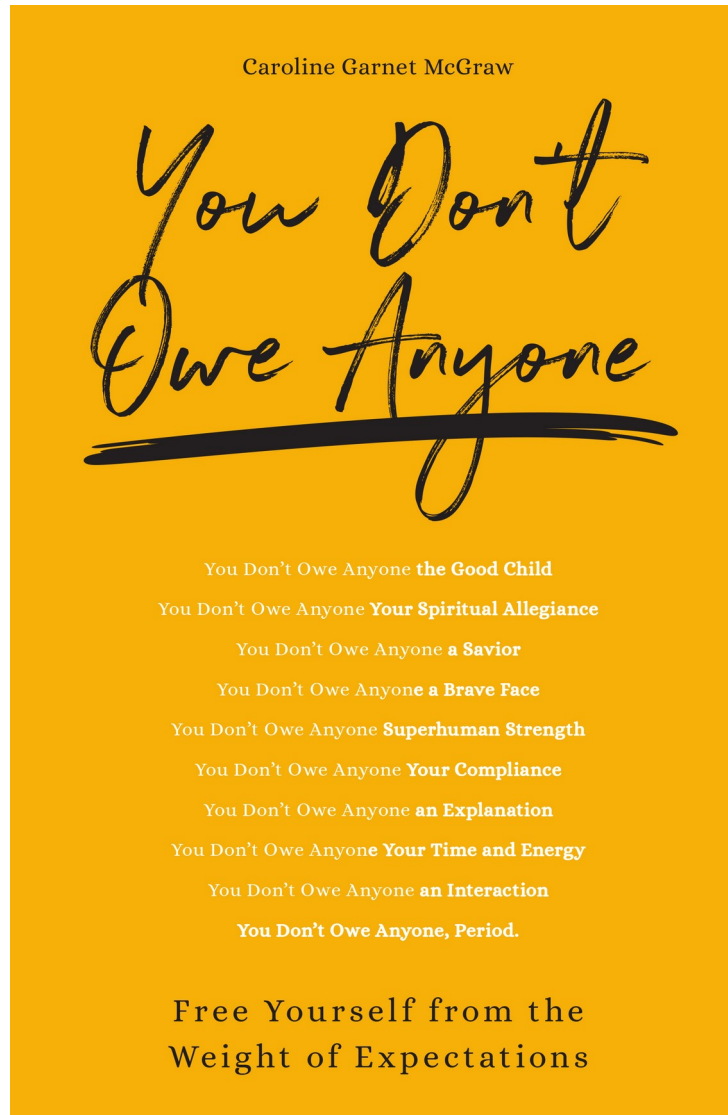
Batch = Do like things together. Don't like making phone calls? Do them all at once and be done!

Yes, there are going to be hard choices. You are going to need to say no to the things you don't want to do, and also to some of the things that you DO want to do! Why? Because your time is finite.



Ready to learn more about how to free yourself from the weight of expectations?

[Read the first two chapters of my book, *You Don't Owe Anyone*.](#)



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